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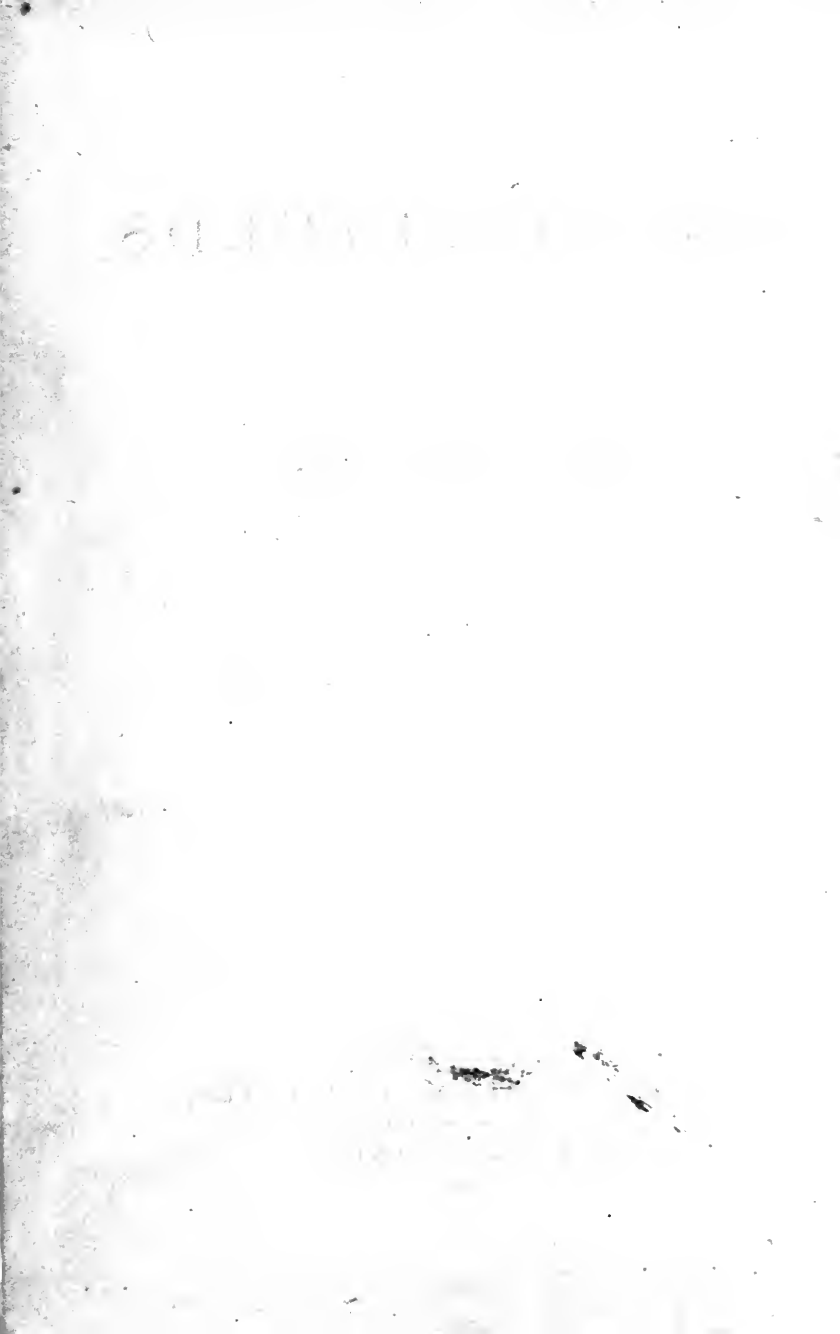
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THE
BATTLE-FIELDS
OF
OUR FATHERS.

BY VIRGINIA F. TOWNSEND.

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To

BENSON J. LOSSING, ESQ.

In grateful acknowledgment of all he has done to preserve to our native land its dear traditions and historical associations—those priceless jewels of her present and future—do I inscribe this book.

V. F. T.



INTRODUCTION.

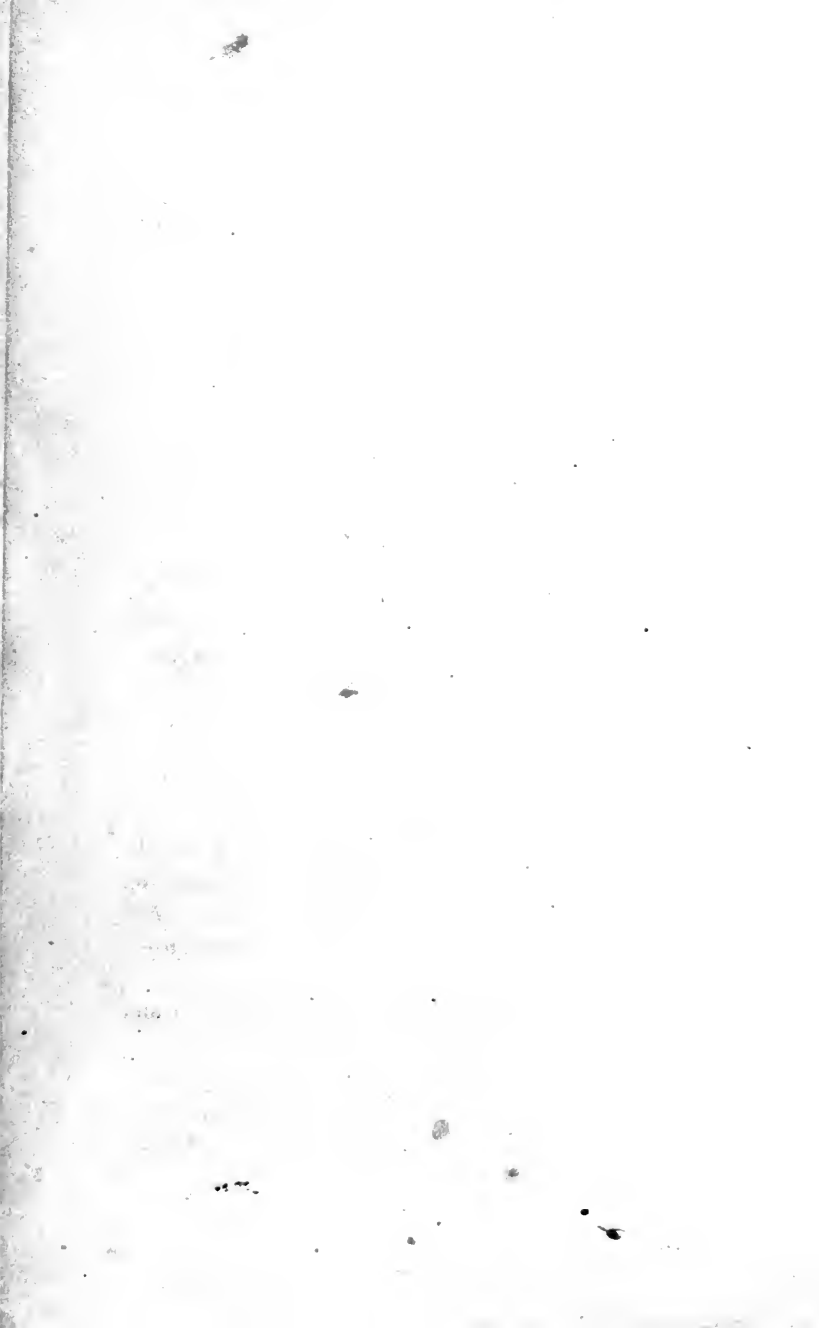
I THINK, like Esau, we do not hold our birthright in sufficient honor. With what legacies does our country endow all her children, in song, and story, and tradition—above all, in noble and immortal deeds of her men and women.

But we hold these loosely, we let them slip away from our hearts and memories, instead of wearing them, our chiefest crown of glory and honor.

With feelings akin to these, I have written my book.

Out of their love and reverence for the past, others could have brought fairer tribute to it than any which these pages hold. Oh, my reader, of such as I have, give I unto thee.

V. F. T.



BATTLE-FIELDS OF OUR FATHERS.

CHAPTER I.

"DEAR me ! there goes the stage horn !" exclaimed Mrs. Patience Palmer, wife of Deacon Daniel Palmer, as the winds brought the sweet clear notes from the distant hills.

She plunged her hand again into the heap of golden quinces on her right side, and continued her monologue while the skins dropped in long, yellow skeins over her fingers, as her knife flashed rapidly about the fruit, "and I must get the quinces pared afore night, or else there's no hope of their being preserved to-morrow mornin' ; and I promised *Miss* Richards I'd be over afore two o'clock to help her get things ready for the barn raisin'—there's no such word as restin' in my dictionary—that's certain—Benny, Benny—there, let that alone !"

The low, running voice suddenly raised itself into an objurgatory tone, which was enforced by a solemn shake of the head, as Mrs. Palmer caught sight of a chubby little hand and arm, which surreptitiously thrust itself into the great pan on the oak chest, heaped with quarters of denuded quinces.

"Please, mother, jest one little piece!" lisped a sweet, pleading voice, and the mother looked down on a small, sun-browned face, with the brightest pair of black eyes, that were for ever dancing with mischief, and a little head whose thick, shining curls made a light wherever it bobbed and nestled.

Mrs. Palmer's face relaxed. "Benny" was her youngest born, and before him there was half-a-dozen brown and yellow heads, which slept still on pillows which no mother's hand had ever spread—over which no mother's sweet lullaby was ever sung; it was more than Mrs. Palmer could stand—the sight of that face, brown as a berry, with its bright eyes and saucy lips.

"It's the very last piece I shall give you," she said, slipping one of the ripest quarters into the fat little hand. "I shouldn't wonder if it should give you the dysentery."

"I aint afraid of him," answered the boy of three, with a comical look of defiance, meant as a general challenge to all the ills of life.

"Benny, you are the worst boy that I ever *did* see!" exclaimed the mother, half appalled at the combative spirit of her youngest born; but the look which she intended to be very impressive and solemn, was contended with, and vanquished by another expression, when she caught sight of the little rogue.

He stood there, in such a sturdy, defiant attitude—so full of life and health, it did not seem that any sickness or suffering could ever touch him, as he smacked his red lips over his quince, and the juice ran out of the corner of his mouth.

Mrs. Palmer pursed her pale lips together to hide the smile that was lurking about them; and which would be certain to neutralize, if not utterly subvert her admonitions.

"What do you think you're comin' to, if you go on at this rate?"

"I'm comin' to be a man, bigger than Robert, pretty soon, and then I shall have a horse and go to ride every day, without askin'."

There was no use now; the smile came, brightening the pale, faded face of the mother, as an hour or two later the last sunlight would the face of day.

"Well, Benny, I hope that you'll make a good man, like your father," said Mrs. Palmer, feeling that her only resort was an ignoble truce. "Come, now, run off and build a meetin' house, with a great steeple, for father to see when he gets home."

This proposition was at once acted on. The boy started with a shout for his small cart of blocks in the corner; and Mrs. Palmer once more bent herself in eliminating the core of a quince.

She sat in the kitchen of an ample old farm-house, which stood some two miles from the town of New London, in the autumn of the year of our Lord seventeen hundred and seventy-four!

The farm-house was two stories high; the roof was steep in front, and slanted nearly to the ground on one side, after the usual fashion of farm-houses at that time. It had an ample, friendly look, as it stood in the midst of pleasant fields on slightly rising ground.

Two miles away from it was the busy, thriving little town of New London, its wharves swarming with a shrewd, bustling population, and the ships which lay at anchor unfurled from their mast-heads in its noble harbor the flags of almost every nation on the face of the earth.

On the other side of the farm-house of Deacon Palmer, stood the hills which saluted the dawn and parted with the day ; and on the south you could see Long Island Sound ; sometimes behind a grey wall of fog, which sooner or later was swept away by the golden arms of sunshine ; and the white sails of the sloops and schooners on its bosom seemed like vast white blossoms opening themselves on the waters.

The year had gone to sleep, and her heart was full of that dream of the tropics—her last and sweetest one—the Indian Summer.

Mrs. Palmer's kitchen windows were all open, and the sunshine filled the low, ample room, and touched with picturesqueness every object on which it rested ; the tall old clock that reached the ceiling, the rush-bottomed chairs, the cherry-table, and the face and figure of the little woman, who, in her short gown and grey skirt, sat diligently paring quinces in the corner.

It was a gentle, motherly face—that which belonged to Mrs. Patience Palmer. Forty-two years had faded its bloom and sharpened its once fair outlines. And the great storms which seven times had thundered over her soul, had left on her face a legible story of patience and suffering ; for of the ten children which had been given to Daniel and Patience Palmer, there remained only their two eldest and their youngest born, and between these there lay seven green little graves.

Deacon Daniel Palmer was an honest, God-fearing man, universally esteemed for his warm heart and sturdy integrity of character. He was a farmer in comfortable, though not wealthy circumstances.

He had slipped a little beyond his fiftieth year, but a

life of hard toil had already begun to tell somewhat upon the stalwart frame of the farmer.

There were thick seams of grey in his hair; and his limbs were stiff after a day's labor, such as would have been mere play in his youth, and he had a "touch of the rheumatis" when the ice broke up in the spring; but the energetic farmer strove hard against these first infirmities of age, and manfully battled the ground, inch by inch, against them.

Benjamin Palmer was placing the last block to a steeple, vastly disproportioned to the edifice whose pride and ornament it was intended to be, when a shadow fell beyond the door-sill, and Mrs. Palmer looked up with a start of surprise.

"Why, father," was her somewhat equivocal welcome, "what has sent you home now! I thought you said it would take you until clear sundown to get that last load of corn in?"

There was a half pleased, half mysterious expression on the face of Deacon Palmer, as he came into the kitchen and seated himself in an arm-chair by the table. It was a face rugged and weather-beaten, but there was a kindly look in the shrewd grey eyes, under the shaggy brows, and the face suited the stalwart limbs.

The farmer took a large bundle from under his right arm, and looked round the kitchen curiously.

"I didn't expect to get home quite so early, but I had a little matter on hand. Where's Grace, mother?" lowering his voice, and glancing round the kitchen.

"She's up stairs, finishin' off her spinnin', I reckon. But, Daniel, what have you got in that bundle?" laying

the half-pared quince in her pan, for Mrs. Palmer's curiosity was now stimulated.

There was a pleasant twinkle in the farmer's grey eyes; he leaned forward a little:

"This is Grace's birth-day, you know, mother?"

"I know it; but I thought likely it had escaped your mind."

"You was mistaken there. I lay up such things where they don't slip out very easily; and I thought it would be pleasant to give her a little surprise, like!"

"To be sure, father," assented Mrs. Palmer, with a smile, her curious eyes on the bundle.

"Well, when Bayley, the dry goods merchant, told me that he was going down to New York, week afore last, I asked him to bring me the handsomest caliker he could find in that city, and it's come by stage this afternoon."

"Well, I do declare, father!" exclaimed little Mrs. Palmer, with a smile all over her face. "Do tear open that wrapper. I'm crazy to see it."

Deacon Palmer took up his wife's knife, severed the cord, and tore away the brown wrappings, and held up the fabric. Over a rich, dark ground were scattered thick bunches of moss roses, the red blossoms just breaking out from the green calyxes, and looking as if the night-dews still hung thick upon the blushing petals.

Mrs. Palmer threw up her hands in admiring amazement.

"Oh, father!" she exclaimed, "what a beauty! I never in all my born days sot my eyes on anything that come up to that."

"I thought that I could trust to Bayley," answered the pleased husband, satisfied, now that his wife endorsed the merchant's selection; and he went on while she made a

tactile examination of the fabric. "He said the goods came in a ship that got in last week, and this was the handsomest pattern among them. It's the real French. He'd warrant it."

"Anybody'd know that it was, at half a glance. How much did you give for it, father?" Mrs. Palmer had the instinctive economy of a New England housewife.

"It was a dollar a yard. I wanted to get the very best, you know."

"Well, it looks worth every cent of it. What will Grace say?"

"Call her down, jest as though nothing had happened," said the father.

And the mother went to the foot of the stairs, and called:

"Grace! Grace!"

The low hum of the spinning-wheel ceased suddenly in the south chamber, and the little feet, which had been so diligently working the treadles for the last two hours, to snatches of old psalm-tunes or sweet country airs, paused in their work, the wheel stopped its rapid revolutions, and Grace Palmer sat still, with her head leaned a little forward to listen.

It was a finely shaped head, in its thick folds of dark bright hair; the face had a rare combination of delicacy, intelligence, and sweetness; not in anywise was it the delicacy which soft and luxurious habits bestow. In the fair young cheeks bloomed the roses that out-door exercise and daily work had planted there; and the full lips had the deep, fresh tint of the scarlet berries which flamed like a red torch around the small mirror on the mantel. But all the outlines were delicate, and oval; and the eyes,

of an intense blue, were full of hidden smiles, and yet they could settle down into deep gravity, and fine scorn.

She was neither genius nor angel, but a sweet, lovable, and intelligent woman, full of warm and generous impulses, that, under the watchful, prayerful culture of her childhood, promised to ripen into fixed and Christian principles, instead of developing after their own will in merely æsthetic directions.

The south chamber, where Grace Palmer sat spinning linen after the custom of the maidens of her day and generation, was her own room; and its two windows commanded a fine sweep of low meadows, with a little silver brocading of streams, and level pastures, and strips of woodland leaning to the Sound. In one corner was the high-post bedstead, with its snowy curtains and deep fringes, and the two heavily carved arm-chairs, and the great mahogany chest, with its brass handles, which her great-grandfather had brought over the waters when he came to plant his roof-tree in the wilderness, completed the furniture of the chamber.

"Grace! Grace!"

This time the voice was louder and hurried, and the girl rose up hastily, glancing at the sun on the sanded floor; and murmuring to herself, "I'm sure it can't be time to get supper for an hour yet," she hurried down to the kitchen.

"Why, you're home early, father," she said, with a little start of surprise, as she entered the room.

"Yes, my child. Have you forgotten that it is your birth-day?"

"Oh, no; but how came you to remember it?"

"Do you think it's a matter of so little consequence to

your father, Grace, that he forgot it was nineteen years ago, to-day, you came to him, the first of his flock?"

She looked up in the weather-beaten face with a smile that was pretty to see; and then he took the calico dress, which Mrs. Palmer had slipped on one side of him before Grace's entrance.

"There, daughter; there's a birth-day present of a new gown for you!"

"Oh, father!" the sweet face flushing into a great light and pleasure.

"Did you ever see anything to beat that?" interposed Mrs. Palmer, as her daughter unrolled the fabric, and held a breadth up to her waist.

"Never, mother; never," exclaimed the delighted girl; "and deep pink is my color, too."

"It used to be mine," added Mrs. Palmer.

"Yes; I remember the first time that I ever set eyes on you, Patience, you had on a pink gown. It was at the old turnpike tavern; and we had a dance and a supper there, and I thought you beat all the other girls hollow."

"Oh, Daniel, it's too late to talk about them days now!" exclaimed Mrs. Palmer; but her faded face flushed with pleasure at her husband's praise, into something of the lost fairness of its youth.

"Oh, it is lovely!" exclaimed Grace, plaiting up a breadth of the dress, and walking back and forth, and drawing a long sigh of satisfaction; "and it'll be such a beauty to wear to the husking party next Wednesday night."

"I expect you'll outshine all the other girls," added Deacon Palmer, with the smile which always made a pleasant light on the weather-beaten face.

"Now, father, don't make her vain; don't," subjoined Mrs. Palmer, in a slightly deprecatory tone.

"Nonsense, mother; she's got too good sense to be that. Come, daughter, go down stairs now, and draw me a pitcher of that new cider to pay for your dress."

Grace rolled up the calico with alacrity, and soon returned from the cellar with a large yellow pitcher filled with the amber liquid. Deacon Palmer blew off the crest of foam on the top, and pouring out a glass of the cider, turned to his daughter, saying:

"Here's to your birth-day, Grace;" and then that deep and fervent piety which was with the old farmer a living faith, underlying his whole life, broke forth in his solemn "The Lord God of your fathers, my daughter, give you returns of this birth-day, until they shall reach down to a good old age, and fill them with peace and blessings, and make the light of His countenance to shine upon you and keep you."

The tears came into the blue eyes of Grace Palmer. With a sudden impulse she threw her arms around her father's neck and kissed his brown cheek with her bright lips. This was something very unusual, for demonstrative affection was in Deacon Palmer's household, as in most Puritan families, a thing little known. Its channels ran deep and broad as life itself; but they seldom reached to the surface. Deacon Palmer drank his cider in silence, and his wife rose at last and shook her quince skins into the empty basket.

"Be spry, now, and fold up your dress, Grace," said the bustling little woman; "it's high time we had the tea-kettle on; and I want to make Johnny-cake for tea. It al'ays sets so nice with cold ham."

"So it does, mother. I'll go and attend to the cattle now, and you may count on my bringin' back an alarmin' appetite to supper. That ere cider's up to the mark this time!" smacking his lips over a second glass, and then hurrying out to the barn.

But a voice which had been quiet for an unparalleled period now suddenly called out:

"Papa, mayn't I go down and see the white calf and the oxen?"

Deacon Palmer turned round, and saw the shining head standing like a picture in the brown frame-work of the kitchen door.

"Papa's little man! To be sure, he may go!" turning back, and catching up his youngest born and setting him on his shoulder, where the child crowed with delight.

Half an hour later, as Grace Palmer was spreading over the cherry table a snowy cloth, which her mother's hands had spun before her remembrance, Mrs. Palmer's voice suddenly called from the pantry—

"Grace, do take the sprinkler, and go down and wet that linen I've spread out to bleach at the fence by the currant-bushes; I want it to have another good sprinklin' afore dark."

The garden was fenced off from the main road by a thick line of currant-bushes. There was but little travelling on that road, and Grace did not hear the sound of horses' feet in the soft sand until they were close upon her. She did not suspect, either, what a picture she made in her brown gingham dress, and the little bit of white ruffling around her neck, with the great watering-pot in her hand, as she turned hastily and confronted the riders.

She recognised the elder inmate at once, as he lifted his

hat to her, for Parson Willetts was a gentleman of the old school, and a representative type of the old Puritan minister. He was a man of dignified and venerable aspect, of stately presence and manners, and his head was white as the snows of the seventy winters of his life. He was regarded with that peculiar awe and affection which his office always inspired in the hearts of a people whose life was shaped and colored by their religious faith and experience—a people with whom this was no sentiment, no æsthetic emotion, but a living, sublime reality, underlying and interpenetrating all others with its lofty claims, its hopes and fears, that beyond reached far out from time, and took hold on eternity—a religion which accepted no compromise, and shrank at no sacrifice, but demanded purity and holiness in every thought and deed, and met all the joys and sorrows of life, all its doubts, and mysteries, and dread, with its sublime

“Thus saith the Lord.”

By the side of Parson Willetts rode his nephew, a young man of twenty-five, who had graduated at Yale College that year, and he was now on a visit to his uncle.

The roses widened in the cheeks of Grace Palmer, as she caught a pair of very dark eyes bent with surprise on her face, and the young gentleman lifted his cap after the courtly fashion of the time.

“Well, that is the sweetest face I’ve looked on for a long time,” said the young gentleman, as the two rode on. “Whose was it, Uncle Jeremiah.”

“Her name is Grace Palmer, Edward,” said the old clergyman. “She is an extremely well-favored young

woman, modest, intelligent, and well-bred, the daughter of my oldest deacon."

"One would know she was all that with the first glance at her face, Uncle Jeremiah. You must take me round to your deacon's before I leave."

A shrewd smile lighted up the grave features of the grey-haired old clergyman, as he looked down on his nephew. Parson Willetts had a reputation throughout the State for the soundness of his theological tenets and the weight of his polemical discourses; but, notwithstanding his controversial tendency and extreme orthodoxy, a heart full of warm and living sympathies throbbed beneath them, and, looking on his nephew, a wind blew up softly from the land of his youth.

"I intended to call there on some church business before the week was out."

"Just the right opportunity for me," laughed the young man. "You shall talk with the deacon, uncle, and of course there'll be nothing left for me but to converse with the daughter."

"I don't see that there will;" and the minister thought, though he did not say it: "I was young once myself."

Grace Palmer went up to the house with the dark eyes so bright in her memory, that the roses were still wide in her cheeks. Before she had reached the door-stone, however, a hand was laid suddenly on her shoulder. She turned with a little start, but no shriek, for Grace was too healthful and active to be very nervous.

"Oh, Robert, that is just like you."

The girl looked into a bright, spirited young face, tanned to a deep brown, the forehead half hidden by a mass of crisp, dark hair.

"What have you been up to this afternoon?"

"Come down to the gate with me, and I'll show you."

"I can't; there's the supper to get."

"Oh, it wont take you half a minute. Come, now, sis;" and he slipped his arm about her waist and hurried her half-reluctant to the gate.

"Haven't I had good-luck this afternoon?" pointing to a peek of chestnuts which piled up a basket at the gate.

"Oh, yes! Why, Robert, have you got these since school?" slipping her hand among the great, brown nuts.

"Every one. They're thick as berries this year, and the frost we had night before last has tumbled them out of their burrs."

"We'll boil them this very night—Why, grandma, how in the world!"

This sudden ejaculation was occasioned by the appearance of a very old woman, leaning on a staff, and wearing a linsey-woolsey gown, who suddenly appeared on the lane close at their right hand.

"How do you do, children?" she panted, as she slowly drew up to them. "No wonder you look struck on seein' me; but the truth is, I thought this Injin summer would be the last chance that I should have to put my face inside your door this year; for, you may depend, there's cold and storm enough lies just beyond the pleasant weather."

"Well, grandma, we're all real glad to see you. Come right up to the house," adapting their light, swift steps to the slow, hobbling ones of the old woman.

Mrs. Comfort Palmer was the deacon's mother, and her life had toiled past its eightieth year, and the long perspective of its memory swept through many of the great tragedies which fill the early history of the Colonies.

She had passed a score of years on the frontiers when the white settlements were constantly invaded by the savages, and she had lived in that long terror of the war-whoop and the scalping-knife which haunted the early settlers of our country.

She had seen the homes of her neighbors wrapped in flames, and heard their death-shrieks filling the still, midnight air; and, forty years before, her husband had been laid dead at her feet, killed in a skirmish with the savages.

So the deep wrinkles on her face had not all been worn there by her years; and yet the old woman had kept her strong, brave heart to the end; and now, bowed with the weight of her four-score years, was waiting at the west windows of her life for the voice of the God of her youth.

Mrs. Comfort Palmer found a hearty welcome from the whole household of her son. She was soon ensconced by the warmest corner of the kitchen fire-place, and after the greetings were over, and the brown hood and shawl removed, Grace's mother said to her—

“Go and get your new dress, and show it to grandma, Grace.”

The old woman put on her iron-bowed spectacles, and peered with her dim eyes at the calico which her granddaughter placed on her lap.

“It's handsome as a picter, Grace. You must lay it by for your weddin' dress. I wouldn't think of wearin' it afore that time.”

“Goodness, grandma!” exclaimed the girl, with a little flush and a toss of her bright head, “I shouldn't think of being married in anything less than silk.”

“Ah, dear me!” sighed the old woman, “the vanity of these times is enough to make one tremble. When I was

a gal, a caliker gown was thought good enough to be married in, and gals was proud enough to go in linsey-woolsey to a singin' school or a huskin'; but now, nothin' short o' foreign goods will do; and, as for standin' up to be married in the gown their own hands had spun, as the best on 'em was proud to, in my day, you don't hear on't. This world's got to a dreadful pass! I sometimes think the end's nigher than we know on!" And the old woman shook her head and looked solemn and significant into the golden coils of flame which were darting about the fore-stick.

"Oh, well, mother," interposed Deacon Palmer, with his shrewd common sense, as he sat with Benjamin perched on his knee, his black, saucy eyes curiously inspecting his grandmother, "you know matters have changed a great deal since you was a young woman, and some for the better, that's sartin. It isn't best to conclude the world's grown any worse 'cause it's got older. Some things grow better by keepin', jest like yourself."

A smile smoothed some of the wrinkles in the withered face, for this delicate compliment of her son's went very far towards reconciling the old woman to the present order of affairs.

"Grandma, you wasn't ever a young woman, was you?" exclaimed Benjamin, slipping off his father's knee at this juncture, and running over to his grandmother and staring her in the face.

"Yes, you little spiled child, I was once," answered the old woman, placing her withered hand fondly on the bright young head.

"Come, all hands; supper's ready!" exclaimed Mrs. Palmer, as she placed a smoking Johnny-cake where it

was flanked with cold ham, and tempting crullers, and honey, and delicious rye bread, and fresh butter; and a moment later, the shining grey hairs, and the shining golden ones, were alike bowed, as Deacon Palmer thanked God for the setting sun which had gathered them all in peace and gladness around the board He had spread for them once more.

CHAPTER II.

AND in that autumn of seventeen hundred and seventy-four, how many families, like that of Deacon Palmer, sat in peace under their own vine and fig-tree in the fair young land of America!

My pen loves to dwell upon that time, before God's hand opened before them the awful tragedies of the Revolution—before those fair fields and pleasant homes were darkened by the blast of war, which, with the birds of the next spring, swept through all the land.

For twelve years, since the close of the Pontiac war, with all its horrors, there had been peace throughout the Colonies. Those twelve years had been a blessed season of peace and growth and development to the young land, which was so soon to take her proud place amid the nations of the earth. Our fathers had planted and sown, and gathered in their goodly harvests, and our mothers had spun their linen to sweet psalm-tunes. Stately grew their sons, and fair their daughters about them, in the beautiful land of their adoption. The tenderness for the "mother country," the yearning for the hawthorn hedges and the morning lark-songs, which distinguished the early pioneers, and gave them somewhat the feeling of "sojourners in a strange land," had passed away before the opening of the Revolution. The affections of our fathers had taken deep and lasting root in the land of their birth.

Here was gathered all which they loved on earth—here were the homes they had reared, and the altars where they worshipped God according to their free consciences. Here, on many a green hillside, were the graves watered by their tears, and under which slept the dear forms they had laid there in the hope of a resurrection unto life immortal. Was it strange that our fathers and our mothers loved their country with a love which was mightier than life? Had not her deserts rejoiced at their coming, and her wildernesses blossomed as the rose before their toil? Was it strange that they answered a little later with one heart at her summons, and for her sake “slaked the grass of Lexington, and reddened the snows of Valley Forge with their blood?”

A prayerful and a God-fearing people beyond any which the world had ever seen, in many respects the best and the noblest men and women the sun had ever shone on, they went through that long and fiery path of the seven years' war with a courage that never faltered, and a faith in the final triumph of their cause which lifted them into a sublime heroism of endurance and self-sacrifice.

And that last bloodless autumn walked smiling over the land, dropping its goodly harvests in every granary, shaking its golden fruits on the green lap of the rejoicing earth, as a decade of autumns had done before.

One loves to think of them all—of those pleasant ten years, with the hum of the spinning-wheels in all the peaceful homes, and the click of the sweep in all the green fields—of the huskings and the quiltings, the dances and the sleighings, and, best of all, the prayer meetings and the Sabbath days.

We seem to see the old firesides, and the glow of the

hickory flames fill the low rooms with a crimson light, richer and more picturesque than the tropics, where, in the long winter evenings, they knit stockings, and cracked nuts, and drank cider, and told their children those fearful tales of the savage wars on the frontiers which filled every home with a shudder.

They saw it all—the awful war-whoop bursting suddenly on the stillness of the midnight, the rush of the painted savages, the glare of the flames as they crackled along the little settlements; and the mother woke from sleep and clasped her frightened babe with a last cry to her heart, and the father seized his musket; but the next moment the door was burst open, there was a wild flash of the tomahawk, and——

The next morning's sun looked down, and where last it had shone upon low dwellings in the midst of waving corn-fields, there was a heap of blackened rafters, and the strong man, and the mother with her sweet lullaby, and the smiling little child, lay white and ghastly among them.

And they lived over all these tragedies in the stories they told by their peaceful firesides, and the little children grew pale as they listened before the Revolution.

"The front room's all lighted up. I wonder if we've got company," exclaimed Grace Palmer to herself, as she turned from the lane into the road which led past her house, a few evenings after her birth-day.

It had only been dark about an hour; and she was returning from a neighbor's, who had just arrived from Hartford; and Grace had run over after tea to see if she had brought any new fashions with her, for she intended to commence on her calico dress the next day.

The young girl hurried along the road, her eyes fastened

on the light which streamed from the "best room" of the farm-house, and which was only opened for distinguished guests and on state occasions. She went softly round the back path to the kitchen door, intending to reconnoitre a little. She was met there by her brother.

"Oh, Grace, mother's just sent me to hunt you up. Who do you think has come!"

"I'm sure I don't know. Anybody I shall have to see?" complacently reflecting that she had on her Scotch gingham dress, with its pretty red plaid, and a black silk apron, which suited it so nicely; for Grace Palmer was only nineteen, with thoroughly feminine tastes and feelings.

"It's Parson Willetts and his nephew, just from Yale College. You needn't feel *flustered*," for Grace threw off her sun-bonnet in a startled way, which made her brother think she needed reassuring.

In a moment the rumpled hair was smoothed before the kitchen mirror, and Grace went into the "best room." She had been walking rapidly, and perhaps that was the reason why there was an unusual bloom on her cheeks, a little heightened by the red plaid dress.

The parlor was a large, wide room, and was furnished with more pretension to gentility than most of the "best rooms" of farm-houses at that period. For instance, there was a carpet on the floor, in red and yellow stripes, which Mrs. Palmer had woven herself; there was an old stuffed mahogany lounge, which had been sent to Mrs. Palmer's mother by her sister in England, and the sides and back were studded thick with bright brass nails; there was also a small mahogany bookcase with glass doors, and inside of this a considerable library for that period. There was Sir Mathew Hale's Contemplations, moral and divine, in

blue binding. There was Rollin's Ancient History, in brown; and next to this, in unpretending grey covers, was the Pilgrim's Progress, that wonderful prose poem, which was like some subtle alchemy transmuting the stern, practical life of our Puritan fathers into warm, rich colors, striking out in pictures that their hearts recognised the great tragedies of human life, its struggles, its defeats, its triumphs, and making of every day's toil and trials, its sorrows and joys, milestones along that mysterious journey over which watched an innumerable company of witnesses; the serene, loving gaze of the angels; the fiery and hateful one of evil spirits, "seeking to devour."

The principal furniture of the room was completed by two arm-chairs, cushioned with flaming chintz patterns, and a table with a woollen cover, daintily embroidered with green leaves and purple clusters, by Grace's own hands.

Parson Willetts had always a warm greeting for the Deacon's pretty daughter; and after it was over, he introduced her, in his kind but stately fashion, to his young nephew, Edward Dudley, who had just left college.

Grace was a little embarrassed as the young gentleman led her to a chair; for he was, in all respects, far above the honest, plain young farmers of the neighborhood. But Grace Palmer was a simple, natural, sensible girl, without any arts and affectations; moreover, her well poised mind and industrious habits kept her from all morbid fancies, and feverish, imaginary dreams and visions of an impossible future. Her moral and mental nature had been enervated by few of the golden visions in which fashionable young ladies of the present day indulge.

She could not play the piano nor speak French, but she had studied Latin for two years. She had read Rollin's

and other Histories, and never left a book until she mastered it. Then she had, with her bright intelligence, that natural grace of movement and manner which we call "lady-like." The young graduate and the deacon's daughter fell at once into a brisk conversation.

It was pleasant to watch the bright, earnest look in Grace Palmer's brown eyes—a pleasant thing to hear the laugh which leaped out of her lips at some sally of her companion's. Edward Dudley, although he was naturally of a grave and studious turn, had a vein of wit which made him a very amusing companion.

Parson Willetts and Deacon Palmer had finished up the "church business," while his wife "toed off" a child's stocking, and "snuffed" the candles, in the two shining brass candlesticks on the table. Then their talk went a little while into ordinary channels—on the prosperity of the town, the crops for that year; and at length it took up the topic which was now become the principal one by every fireside and among every circle which gathered together at the corners of the streets, with anxious, thoughtful faces, throughout the land that autumn.

"Our Congress keeps together a long time down there in Philadelphia, Parson Willetts," said the Deacon.

"Yes, sir," subjoined Parson Willetts, settling himself back in the chintz-cushioned chair. "They've got business on hand which can't be done up in a day. The liberties and the happiness of three millions of people depend on their decisions; and it's a time to be slow and wise when one thinks of this."

"That's a fact, Parson Willetts," responded Deacon Palmer, shaking his head. "Things look dark enough for our country just now."

"Dark enough, sir; dark enough. We need a double measure of faith to carry us through this time of wrong and injustice in the high places in the earth."

"That's true, Parson. If the Lord don't come up to our help against the mighty, what is to come of us? We've sent petition, memorial, and remonstrance to King, and Parliament, and Commons, without avail. They seem bent on depriving us of our rights. Look, sir, at their closing the port of Boston, and filling her harbor with ships of war, and quarterin' her troops on the inhabitants; it makes my blood bile to think of it."

"Father, father, don't now!" exclaimed Mrs. Palmer for the Deacon had got excited, and brought his hand down on the table in a most belligerent fashion for so peaceable a man.

"Let him speak out, Mrs. Palmer," interposed Parson Willetts. "It's no time for us to keep crying peace, when there is no peace. Deacon Palmer, you speak the truth. We can never submit to it; to see our rights as freemen—our rights as British subjects—our chartered rights, taken from us; our men torn from the country, to be tried in foreign courts; a standing army quartered upon us—Parliament imposing taxes without the consent of our legislatures, to get a revenue out of us—I repeat, sir, we are not a race of slaves to submit to these things!"

The fire of his youth glowed in the eyes of Parson Willetts now. The calm face burned with indignation as he recounted the wrongs of his countrymen, and the candle-light flickered in his snowy hair.

"We've tried every means to reach them, but it's failed. We've refused to take their manufactures, and distressed their trade; but Lord North, like George Grenville afore

him, seems bent on carryin' this taxation bill through, and forein' our rights from us."

"Precisely so, Deacon Palmer. My hopes are all centred in this Congress now. It was a blessed day for our country when the Virginia legislature met in the 'old Raleigh tavern,' and denounced the Boston Port Bill, and devised the plan of the Congress, which all the other Colonies so cordially endorsed.

"Virginia, sir, has espoused the cause of her sister Colony, Massachusetts, as though the act which left the ships of Boston rotting at its wharves, and the grass growing in its pleasant streets, had been a blow aimed right at her own heart. God remember it of the noble old province, and give strength and prosperity to her future!"

"Amen!" said Deacon Palmer, fervently. "Massachusetts will not soon forget the debt of gratitude which she owes Virginia. Our only hope and strength is in *Union*, and a blow aimed at one of our Colonies is a blow aimed at the very life of all."

"That is true," interpolated Edward Dudley, who had listened with intense feeling to every word of the conversation between his uncle and the Deacon, his lips compressed, and his whole face kindled with feeling, which showed how near the matter lay to his heart.

"But, Uncle Jeremiah, supposing the British government is resolved on violating our rights as her subjects; suppose that her Parliament, as hitherto, will treat our remonstrances with contempt, deprive us of all our liberties, continue on its course of high-handed injustice—bent on crushing us, till, as Lord North says, 'America is prostrate at her feet,' what in this case are the British Colonies to do?"

The old clergyman rose up from his chair. His tall, thin figure seemed to expand beyond its usual altitude in the low parlor; a great light flashed out from the thin, fine old face. His hearers gazed on him in breathless silence.

"Then there is but one last thing to be done," said the solemn voice of Parson Willetts. "Let every man in the British Colonies take his musket on his shoulder and go out and fight for his home, for his rights, for his children, for all that a man holds dearer to him than his life; let him fight until there is not a man left in all the Colonies of British America to witness her shame and degradation; fight until all our wives are left widows and our children fatherless. The fair vine which our fathers planted, and under whose blessed shadows we have eaten our bread and worshipped our God in peace, shall have its roots watered with our best blood before we will see it fall; and may the God of battles—the God whose right arm piled up into a mighty wall the waters of the Red Sea and led Israel through the deep—be on our side and give us the victory!"

The old man and the young, the mother and the daughter, caught the spirit of patriotic sacrifice which glowed on the lips of the old minister. The candlelight shone on pale faces sublimated into intense but not demonstrative enthusiasm.

Edward Dudley spoke first. "When the time comes, we'll be ready, uncle. There isn't a man among my classmates at Yale who wouldn't buckle on his sword, or shoulder his musket to-morrow, and lay down his life for his country. George the Third and his Parliament will yet find that he's got freemen to deal with."

"I've got three boys in heaven, I humbly trust, and two on earth, Parson Willetts," said Deacon Palmer, "and if the five stood young men, the staff of my old age, before me to-day, I'd send 'em every one, with my blessin', to fight for their country."

"And I'd bid 'em God-speed, Daniel," said Mrs. Palmer; and the stocking lay in her lap, and her faded eyes flashed through her tears.

"And you and I would stay at home, mother, and spin the clothes, and heat up the lead, and mould it into bullets," added Grace Palmer.

And this was the spirit of our fathers and our mothers.

"England will encounter a resistance she little expects from her Colonies, if the time comes when she shall pour her huge, well-disciplined armies down on us," said Parson Willetts, as he resumed his seat.

"Yes, and her armies will meet a foe that's used to warfare," interposed the Deacon. "We could have managed that old Indian war on the frontier better without 'em than we did with 'em. Look at that army of Braddock's, and what became of it. Cut up, sir, cut up and put to rout by an ambuscade of savages; when, if the general had taken the advice of his young aide-de-camp, George Washington, they'd have taken Fort Du Quesne afore the sun went down, and likely enough without strikin' a single blow."

"Certainly they would," added the clergyman. "That Indian war taught us one good lesson—that whatever British troops might do on their own soil, they weren't invincible on ours. They're not used to fighting in a new country, and there are plenty of noble fellows lying in their graves to-day who'd have been above ground

this hour if they'd only have had provincial officers to lead them in that campaign. The British officers are wedded to their old military forms and systems, and those are not the things for a new country like ours."

"That's true as the Gospel, Parson. It was outrageous the way that war was carried on twenty years ago on the frontier. It might have been put an end to in half the time, if the British commanders hadn't been so obstinate, and held the provincials in such contempt."

Just then the ancient clock in the kitchen struck nine. It at once put an end to the conversation, which had been carried on for the last hour and a half with such earnestness by the Deacon and his guests.

"Robert," said the farmer, "you run down cellar and draw a pitcher of cider, and I'll go to the orchard and get a basket of seek-no-furthers. They've done finely this year, Parson."

"It's chilly to-night, father, and you'd better put on your greatcoat if you're going down into the orchard, for I'm afraid you'll get another attack of rheumatis in your back," said Mrs. Palmer, as she paused on the way to the kitchen for a loaf of her raised cake.

"Oh, let me go down to the orchard, father!" exclaimed Grace, springing up. "I like to gather apples."

"Yes; but you can't shake the tree," said the Deacon.

"I'll volunteer to do that part," exclaimed Edward, presenting himself at Grace's side. "Will you allow me to accompany you, Miss Palmer?"

Of course Grace had no serious objections to this arrangement, and she was quite too natural and truthful to affect any; so her mother gave her a small wicker basket,

and she wrapped a shawl about her head, and went out of the back door with Edward Dudley.

"Let me have the basket, please"—and Grace resigned it into his hands.

It was a beautiful autumn night. The earth lay in a silver lake of moonlight, that softened and idealized every object; the trees flamed their red and golden splendors in the late autumn, and even the old brown barn, past which the road to the orchard lay, looked picturesque in the sheet of moonlight.

"We shall have to let down the bars," said Grace, as they reached a cornfield, beyond which lay the orchard.

"Oh, no. I can assist you over; the bars are not high."

Grace looked rueful enough at the idea of exhibiting her agility before a young gentleman who had graduated at Yale College and was the minister's nephew; but the next moment she was seized lightly about the waist, and, before she had time to remonstrate, she was gently deposited on the other side of the bars, and her companion vaulted lightly over and was by her side.

"Well, Mr. Dudley, I wouldn't have believed any mortal could have done that so quick," exclaimed Grace, only half-recovered from her surprise.

"Wouldn't you, Miss Palmer," laughed the gentleman. "Oh, I can give you stronger proofs of my agility than that;" and from this time their talk went on in a half-grave, half-playful fashion until they reached the orchard, where "greenin's," and "sheep-noses," lay thick in the brown grass.

The orchard was on a slight elevation, and the Sound

lay in the distance before them like a great shining sea, with the white sails of the sloops and schooners blossoming out of the mists in the distance. They stood still a moment, looking at it in admiration which found no voice nor words; and then Grace led the way to the old tree in the centre of the orchard.

"The birds have built their nests in its branches more springs than my father can remember," said the bright, sweet voice, sounding doubly so in the stillness and moonlight. "They are the best apples in the orchard."

"It's a fine old tree, and could give us a good many histories and biographies if it could only speak," said the young man, standing still a moment and surveying the gnarled old tree, which bore its years so bravely, and covered its old brown limbs every spring with a white roof of blossoms. "I like old things."

"So do I," responded Grace, with a bright, pleased glance. "Somehow I have an especial veneration and affection for this tree; and every spring I watch with peculiar interest for the first dark ruffling of leaves on these brown old branches; and they always seem like a new written poem to me; or, at least, to write the poetry to the old tree which is in my heart, but which I can't write."

"What a sweet, quaint fancy!" thought the young man; but he did not speak it, he only said: "Don't you write poetry, Miss Palmer?"

"I—oh, no," answered Grace, with a look of surprise. "I never wrote a line of poetry in my life, except"—correcting herself, for she was rigidly truthful—"when I was a little girl, and wrote compositions at school."

"You speak it, then, without writing it."

Grace did not do Edward Dudley exactly justice when she thought that this remark was merely a graceful compliment, for the young man had only expressed his sincere conviction in his speech. She bent down and searched among the shadows knotted with moonlight; but she and her companion did not find more than half-a-dozen apples on the ground, the red fruit gleaming like vast carbuncles in the grass.

"Robert has had some school-friends here this afternoon; that explains why there are so few apples on the ground. We shall have to shake the tree, Mr. Dudley."

He took hold of the trunk. "You must get out of the range of the apples, Miss Palmer."

"Oh, I'm not afraid. I like to see them come tumbling down," said the girl, standing under the outside limbs.

The next moment the great branches of the old tree shook to and fro. A shower of the ripe fruit flashed like red blossoms through the air, and tumbled heavily on the grass.

In the midst of it Edward Dudley heard a cry from Grace, and she dropped on her knees, with her hand to her head. She had paid a dear price for her æsthetic enjoyment of the apples; one of the largest had struck her on the side of her head.

Edward Dudley was by her side in a moment. "Are you hurt?" he asked, with much concern.

"Oh, dear! it seems as though that apple must have broken my head open!" with her hand pressed hard against it to stifle the pain.

"It is too bad; I ought not to have allowed you to stand there. Can I do nothing to relieve you?"

"Nothing, thank you. It's all my fault; the pain will be gone in a moment;" and she tried to smile as she lifted up her face to him.

It looked very sweet and child-like there in the moonlight under the apple-tree; and the tears which the pain had forced there shone bright in the brown eyes of Grace Palmer.

The beauty and the tears stirred the heart of the minister's nephew, as it had never been stirred before. It was very rude in him, and I can only offer in his defence a plea which by no means excuses him—that he did not exactly know what he was about; but he bent down and kissed with tender reverence the rose in the cheek of Grace Palmer.

She was on her feet in an instant, all sense of pain lost in the mingled surprise, confusion, and indignation which took possession of her. The latter soon got the mastery.

"Mr. Dudley," said the Deacon's daughter, with the dignity of an insulted princess, "how dared you do so? I am not accustomed to have gentlemen treat me in that manner!"

"I'm sorry," faltered the young man, fairly aghast at his boldness; "I didn't intend to, Miss Palmer; but," and here there came a twinkle in the dark eyes, "a girl has no business to look so pretty that a fellow can't help kissing her, and then be very hard on him for it."

The indignation in Grace's face abated slightly.

"I would not have believed that you, a minister's nephew, would have done so rude a thing," she said, in a tone of solemn admonition which would have suited her grandmother.

"I didn't know but ministers' nephews had as good a

right to kiss pretty girls as other kinds of nephews, if you put it on that ground."

Grace caught the glance of covert amusement which accompanied this remark. She tried to preserve her dignity, but the dimples about her lips betrayed her, and, quite amazed at her own indiscretion, she heard her laugh thrilling through Edward Dudley's, and filling the night with a peal of mirth.

"They'll wonder what has become of us," she said, setting herself diligently about filling the basket, in which her companion rendered assiduous service, after stopping to inquire:

"How is your head now?"

"Better, thank you; the pain is nearly gone."

They returned to the house silently. Just when they reached the kitchen door, the young man turned suddenly to the girl:

"You will forgive me?" he said. "I did not mean to be rude to you."

"I ought not to, Mr. Dudley," said Grace; and Edward Dudley seemed not only satisfied with this ambiguous reply, but looked as though he was half tempted to repeat his offence.

"I think you must have found it hard work to shake that tree, Mr. Dudley," said the Deacon, with some solicitude, when his daughter and her guest entered the parlor.

"It's quite a walk down to the orchard, father," said Grace, and the hue of her cheeks rivalled the red of the apples.

"Have you ever been in New London before, Mr. Dudley?" asked the Deacon, as he poured a glass of sweet cider for his guest.

"Never, sir; but I have promised Uncle Jeremiah this visit ever since I was a little boy."

"Going to stay a little while, then?" with that kindly sort of curiosity which generous natures are apt to feel for those with whom they are brought in contact.

"My stay is somewhat indefinite. I am engaged on a matter of some surveying, which will keep me in this part of the State for a while."

The conversation was here interrupted by Mrs. Palmer, who presented a tempting loaf of "raised cake" to her guests, with many apologies that it was not fit to offer owing to her not having had "good luck" with the yeast that week. The young man, however, did full justice to the ample slice which filled his plate.

The cider, the cake, and the apples, received from the guests the amount of praise which they well merited, and then the household knelt down, and the minister commended its inmates to the Love and Care which kept their brooding watch over it by night and by day.

And then he prayed for his country—that God would work out for her a speedy and sure deliverance—that the oppressor in high places should not prevail against her—that He would rise up to her help against the mighty, and that the land which had been consecrated as no other land had ever been to His service—whose first altars had been reared in His name, might rise to glory and honor amid the nations—that wisdom might be given to her rulers, to lay broad the foundations of her government in justice and righteousness—and that concord, sweet and eternal, might reign through all her Colonies—that the pulse of each should beat to one heart of common brotherhood; and that the men and women of these Colonies should be

true to their God and their country—and if they were called for her sake to pass through fiery trials, that they might rise to sublime heights of self-sacrifice and devotion, giving up life, and all things dearer than life, for her honor—and that they might bequeathe to their children a land free and honored—a land of whom it should be said, “Happy is that people whose God is the Lord!”

And who shall dare to question that prayers like these did not bring their reward—that the triumph of the Revolution and the inheritance which our fathers bequeathed us were not the blessed ANSWER of a God who giveth not by measure unto those who seek Him?

The guests were all gone, the lights were extinguished in the parlor, and Grace had just placed the pile of soiled dishes on the kitchen table, when her brother sidled up to her with a roguish laugh in his eyes.

“Grace,” he whispered, “didn’t your longest apple-skin twist into a ‘D’ to-night?”

“Nonsense, Robert;” with a toss of the head, which had a restless, wavering habit, like that of lilies on slender stems in deep currents of water. “Always talking about things that you don’t understand. Take this light and go straight to bed.”

“Yes, my son; it’s very late. Go to bed—go to bed,” added his father.

“Seems to me this butter never *will* come!” exclaimed Grace Palmer, as she lifted the churn-cover for the sixth time, and saw the lumps of concreted cream floating in a sea of yellow liquid; and once more she lifted the churn-handle and swept the dasher up and down.

It was still early in the October morning; her fair

cheeks were flushed with the rapid exercise, and the small, round arms were bare above the elbows. She looked like a picture, whose unstudied grace an artist would have rejoiced in, as she sat on the low stool working the churn.

"Why won't it come, Grace?" asked Benjamin, coming out of the corner where he had been engrossed in a picture of Daniel in the lion's den which his grandmother had brought him.

"I don't know, Benny, unless it's because that I've set my heart on finishing my new dress to-day. Stand out of sister's light, there's a good boy."

"I know what'll make it come; grandma told me. Sing the song about the butter-cake!"

Grace smiled indulgently on the little rogue, who always had eyes and ears for everything which was going on, and she struck up a simple air to the incantation with which our foremothers used often, when little girls, to beguile the "butter into coming:"

"Come, butter, come!
Elijah's at the gate,
Waiting for the butter cake—
Come, butter, come!"

Benjamin stood still for awhile, enjoying the song and the motion. At last, however, he ran off; and, although Grace had no faith in the incantatory powers of the rhyme over the cream, she was very glad to find, on her next inspection of it, that it had congealed.

At that moment, she caught Benjamin's voice exclaiming in loud, earnest tones:

"Come this way—I'll show you where she is." And looking up, she saw Mr. Dudley standing in the low

kitchen doorway, piloted there with marked satisfaction by Benjamin.

Poor Grace! there was no help for it now. She thought of her homespun dress, her bare arms and unbraided hair, and tried to stammer out an apology as she rose up, with the roses glowing wide in her cheeks.

"I beg your pardon for coming at this early hour, in this informal manner," said Edward Dudley; "but I am going down the coast to-day and shall be back to-morrow night; so I stopped to inquire whether, in default of better company, you will permit me to accompany you to singing-school at the brown schoolhouse to-morrow night. I believe they propose to go to old Mill Tavern afterwards."

"Thank you, Mr. Dudley. I shall be happy to go. Will you walk in?"

Grace managed to accomplish this speech with tolerable composure.

"No, thank you; I neglected to secure my horse at the gate, and he may be in a migratory frame of mind. If I could accept your invitation, however, I should plead hard for permission to relieve you at that churn; for I'm a veteran at the business, as I churned butter for my mother when my head was no higher than this one," stroking Benjamin's crisp curls.

"Good morning, Miss Palmer."

"Good morning, Mr. Dudley."

"Oh, Benny, I never had such a mind to give you a good spanking in all my life," exclaimed Grace, as she turned back into the kitchen and looked down ruefully at her dress.

"Why, what has the child done now?" exclaimed Mrs.

Palmer, entering from the garden, where she had just spread some peppers to dry.

"Mr. Dudley has just gone from here, you see. He called to invite me to the singing-school to-morrow night, and don't you think, Benjamin brought him round to the kitchen door, and displayed me in this plight!"

"Wall, he asked me where you was," dimly comprehending his mistake, and very little regretting it.

"You knew better, you naughty boy!" shaking her hand threateningly at him, whereupon he disappeared at the back door, and was soon engaged in chasing the chickens.

"Never mind, Grace; never mind," said her mother, consolingly; "no young man's going to think less of a girl, if he is a scholar, because he finds her up bright and early in the morning, and smart at work. I've heard your Grandmother Warren say that often in my day."

With which consoling reflection Grace was obliged to betake herself once more to her churn.

CHAPTER III.

OLD Mrs. Palmer had had a "touch of the rheumatis" on her return from her last visit to her son's; and Grace had gone down to her grandmother's with a famous syrup whose ingredients had been communicated to her mother by a sick Indian woman whom she had received into her house and nursed through several weeks of severe illness during the first year of Mrs. Palmer's marriage; and the squaw had evinced her gratitude to her benefactress by embroidering her various ornamental cushions and slippers in all those quaint and beautiful devices in which the æsthetic element discloses itself among her race; and had at last inducted her hostess into the mysteries of several syrups and decoctions of wonderful medicinal properties for which her tribe was famous among the Indians.

And Mrs. Comfort Palmer solemnly averred that the most skilful ointments and decoctions which civilization had produced had not the power of eliminating the pain which crept with the autumn chills through her bones like the magical syrup of the old Indian woman. Grace walked rapidly along, a smile loitering in and out of her lips, for that night she was to attend the singing-school and make her début at the old mill tavern with the minister's nephew in her new dress; and she had an agreeable consciousness that both would produce a strong sensation at the school-house and the tavern.

It was one of the last days of November. The earth had rolled up and laid by all her garments of praise; the trees stood desolate and bare without the "joy of leaves," and yet the day was beautiful with the lost beauty of the summer.

Winds, soft as the May's, loitered among the barren branches, and the sunlight and the sodden earth lay under the warm, sweet sunshine; and the year, hanging on the skirts of winter, had forgotten her old age, and had lapsed into a dream of her youth. And walking, as I said, rapidly, and feeling amid the flutter of her pleasant thoughts—for Grace was dreaming like the day—a gladness at her heart for the beauty about her, the young girl turned suddenly from the turnpike into the pasture, which considerably diminished the distance home. And treading along the short, faded grass, she suddenly espied, in a corner of the lot, a young oak around which a wild grape-vine had clambered, and near the top of which hung a dozen clusters of frost grapes, gleaming in the sunlight like purple goblets veined with gold.

"How beautiful they *do* look!" murmured Grace. "They'll be the last I shall see for a year. I wonder if I can't get them now! I might mount those bars and catch hold of the lower limb of that sapling. I'd climbed, before I was ten years old, taller trees than that, when the cherries were ripe in grandma's backyard; and there's nobody to see me here."

She was light of foot and agile of limb; she mounted the round bars easily, and caught hold of one of the upper branches of the sapling.

It swayed to and fro, as the girl did, mounted on the bars, but she held her place and the twig firmly; and the

next moment she had grasped the branch, and the great clusters were almost in her hands, when a voice close at hand sang out :

“ Wait, Miss Grace, a minute. I’ll get them for you.”

She looked down in surprise and confusion, and recognised the speaker.

“ If I had suspected anybody would see me I shouldn’t have been up here ; but as you’ve had a good view of me, it’s useless to excuse myself now.”

There was a natural grace and fitness in this apology which would have done honor to any high-bred lady.

The young man whom she addressed had taste and sense enough to appreciate both the reply and the graceful attitude of the girl as she stood poised on the bars. He gave her his hands, and she sprang lightly down on the grass ; and the next moment he had resumed her place on the bars, and the clusters were tumbling at her feet.

“ Oh, thank you, Mr. Jarvys. You’re entitled to half of them by right of conquest.”

“ But not by right of discovery, which is the prior one ;” filling her basket with the clusters. “ Do you know, Miss Grace, I was on my way to your house and have fortunately encountered you ?”

With a woman’s acuteness she divined the young man’s errand. “ I thought you were out of town.”

“ Yes. I only returned from Worcester last evening, where I’d gone on some business for father which detained me. They’ve got the war fever high up there, Miss Grace.”

“ I’m glad to hear it. Every son of America should be true to his country now,” said Grace, with energy ; for her quick instincts divined a shade of disapproval or contempt in this remark.

"Of course he should," answered the young man with an emphasis in striking contrast with his last words. "I rejoice to see the spirit and unity of the Colonies against the usurpations of the mother country. And now, if you'll allow me, I'll come to my errand at once?"

"Certainly, Mr. Jarvys," intently occupied at the moment in arranging the grapes in her basket in artistic fashion.

"I suppose you have heard of the singing to-night and the gathering at the old mill tavern? If you are not engaged already, as is most likely, I should like the honor of your company. I didn't get back until to-day or I should have made bold to ask it before."

"Thank you, Mr. Jarvys, I should be happy to accept your invitation if I had not another's."

The young man's brow darkened a little, and a shadow of disappointed or bitter feeling entirely changed the character and expression of Richard Jarvys's face; he kept on silently by the side of Grace through the short, sodden grass, and his brow gradually cleared up as he thought that he had no right to be disappointed. "Of course, such a girl as Grace Palmer would be engaged for a frolic by some fellow lucky enough to be on hand in time."

Naturally kind-hearted, and thinking from her companion's silence that he was hurt at her delicate refusal, Grace looked up with some playful sally, intended to atone for any wound that his pride had sustained.

The cloud was gone from Richard Jarvys's face now. He answered in the same bantering fashion, and they went jesting and chatting after the manner of young men and women through the long pasture.

Many persons called Richard Jarvys's face handsome;

but they were usually people not very acute in physiognomy, or profound in the knowledge of human nature. The more one penetrated the young man's face the less he liked it; yet all the features were good, and the first glance certainly gave an agreeable impression. A florid complexion, with sharp, grey eyes, coarse, lustrous black hair, and a fine muscular figure, with a jaunty, self-possessed air, struck one on a first meeting with Richard Jarvys. The mouth looked well enough in repose, except for a certain weakness, which every successive glance corroborated; but it had suggestions of meanness and obstinacy which had not yet hardened themselves into a *part* of its character, and only occasional circumstances developed them, but which, once seen, would be keys opening into hidden corners and closets of the man's character of which he had no suspicion.

He was the son of a wealthy ship-owner, who resided about a mile from Deacon Palmer's, and the young man had hardly a rival among the rustic beaux of the neighborhood. He was shrewd, lively, social; had seen a good deal of the world, having taken several voyages in his father's vessels; and had that quick observation and that faculty of making the most of his information which always causes a man to be taken for quite all that he is worth.

The young people had reached the lane which turned up to Grace's home. On one side of this was a field, flanked by a low stone wall, and a tall old butternut tree grew close to the wall, a few rods from the pasture, and the knotty branches were shaking their tassels of faded leaves in the soft winds, as though it, too, was dreaming of the lost glory of May.

The long walk and the pleasant talk had deepened the blossoms in the cheek of Grace Palmer, and the sight of them stirred the soul of Richard Jarvys.

"Where was the use of delay?" he mused; somebody else might anticipate him in this matter, as had been done in the smaller one; and he looked on the sweet beauty of Grace Palmer with a greedy longing to feel that it belonged to him, and a selfish fear that another might rob him of it. Any higher feeling was not in the nature of the man. No sense of self-sacrifice, no humiliating consciousness of unworthiness of the great gift which he was about to seek, and which would have impressed a noble nature at such a time, swayed the heart of Richard Jarvys. Still, there was a little quiver of doubt and agitation in the tones which said:

"Grace, if you are not in too great a hurry, I wish you would sit down a few moments on the wall here; I want to speak to you."

With a woman's quick instinct, Grace divined what was coming. She would gladly have seized any pretext to avoid it, but none offered itself. So she let her companion seat her under the butternut tree, saying, as unconcerned as possible:

"I must be back before sundown, Mr. Jarvys, as I promised mother I'd get the biscuit into the oven before five o'clock."

This very practical rejoinder did not succeed in dampening the ardor of the young man. He looked in the girl's face, he drew close to her side, and, in the next few moments, Grace Palmer knew that the hand and the name which were considered the greatest prize in all her neighborhood were at her disposal. She was not a flirt; she was a generous, sympathetic woman; and her heart flut-

tered with pain and embarrassment, for Richard had pleaded his cause with all the art of which he was master.

"Mr. Jarvys, you do me a great honor ; but—but—you will forgive me—I cannot accept it."

"Why not?" asked Richard Jarvys ; and his voice was husky and greedy.

"Because I cannot give you respect and friendship—that is all."

"No, Grace, don't say that ;" and he clutched her hand. "You will learn to love me ; for there is nothing that I will not do to make you, and I shall be satisfied with what you can give me. Do not turn away from me, Grace. You shall be loved better than ever woman was loved before."

Passion gave to the tones of Richard Jarvys an almost magnetic intensity. A shadow of doubt and anxiety passed over the girl's face. She looked up at the young man as though, for a moment, her own feelings wavered with a doubt whether he did not speak the truth, and she might not, after all, learn to love him. But her heart was true to its own instinct. A shudder, too faint for Richard Jarvys to perceive, crept over the girl with the thought of being his wife.

"Richard," she answered, for they had been playmates in their childhood, "if I could give you any hope I would ; but, you know it would be sin for me to say what my heart does not endorse—what I feel from its depths that it never can. I am grateful to you for the honor that your offer does me, and you will find some woman far worthier of it than I am, who will be proud of your love."

And with these words Grace rose up, for it was time to end this interview.

Richard Jarvys dropped her hand as though it burnt

him, buried his face in his own, for he would not have Grace see the storm which went over him—a storm of passion, bitterness, and disappointment.

Grace walked a few rods down the lane, and then she turned back :

“Richard, forgive me for what I have said, and let us be friends—always;” and she gave him her hand. He took it and said :

“We will be friends, Grace.”

But his manner did not quite satisfy her as she went on. And before Grace Palmer had reached the end of the lane, Richard Jarvys rose up and looked after her. A sullen, baffled, malignant glance darted after the girl, which proved that the wound which Richard Jarvys’s pride had received was one which would make him Grace Palmer’s enemy for ever, that all the gentleness of her refusal had not reached his better nature, and that the memory of that afternoon would always rankle in his soul.

“I hope Richard isn’t angry with me,” mused Grace as her rapid feet went along the brown grass. “To think I’ve had an offer this afternoon—from Richard Jarvys, too. What would the girls say! Well, I’m really sorry, as I couldn’t accept it.”

“Are you truly sorry for it, Grace?” softly whispered the girl’s conscience, at this stage of her cogitations.

She was too honest to attempt to evade the matter with any pretty sophistries; and Grace was a young girl, and it was not in the nature of things that she should feel otherwise than flattered at the compliment which she had received.

“Well, at all events, I *should* be sorry, if I thought it would give Richard any long pain or sorrow; and he did

seem very much in earnest," was the conclusion of her cogitations as she opened the garden gate.

"Mother, what *do* you think has happened this afternoon?" asked Grace, as she hurried into the pantry, where her mother was busily engaged in preparing a pile of doughnuts for frying.

"I can't tell, child. You've been gone long enough. Grandma had a fresh attack of rheumatis?"

"Oh, no; she's pretty smart, considering. Don't you think, mother," drawing a little closer to her and lowering her voice to a mysterious whisper, "I've had an offer of marriage this afternoon!"

"Why, Grace! what do you mean?" holding still the long strip of dough she was convolving, in her amazement. "Who did it come from?"

"From Richard Jarvys, mother. He found me on the way home. You see he was coming up here to invite me to the singing-school this evening."

"Well, I declare, Grace!—what would your father say? Richard's a nice, likely young man, and'll make his own way in the world."

"I know it, mother; but I couldn't have him, and I told him so;" and here Grace related to her much interested parent all that had occurred under the butternut tree.

Richard Jarvys's brisk, pleasant ways had made an agreeable impression on Mrs. Palmer; moreover, his father was the richest man in the neighborhood; and, though Mrs. Palmer was a very good woman, she was not without a share of social ambition for her daughter.

"We're in no hurry to get rid of you for the best man in the world, Grace; but there isn't a girl who'd have let

such a chance slip within a long distance of here. You know that Richard will inherit his father's property, for he's an only child?"

"I know it, mother; but you wouldn't have me accept a man for his money when I didn't love him?"

"Oh, no; of course not, child;" hastening to reassure Grace on a matter in which principle was involved. "I'm sure I didn't marry your father from any such motive, for there were those who could have laid down their hundreds for every dollar of Daniel Palmer's when I promised to be his wife."

"Well, mother, I am your own daughter; if ever I marry any man it will be as you did my father—for love only;" slipping off her straw bonnet as she spoke.

"That's the right way to talk, Grace. I've never seen the hour that I regretted my choice;" and Mrs. Palmer returned to her intricate convolutions of dough, which she accomplished with wonderful dexterity.

"But after all, Grace," continued Mrs. Palmer, in a tone of solemn admonition, heaving a sigh, "it isn't best for young girls to have their minds too much sot on gettin' married. They little imagine all the trials and troubles they've got to go through with. Men are very different bein's from angels; and though they're ready enough at making promises, it's another thing when it comes to keepin' 'em."

"But there's father, you know, mother?" interposed Grace, certain that no arguments in favor of the stronger sex would be half so forcible as this allusion, which, at least, afforded one solitary refutation of her mother's theory.

"Your father, Grace, isn't to be named amongst most men."

Grace opened her lips to speak, but her mother's olfactories were at that moment assailed by an odor of burning fat.

"I'd forgot all about that shortenin'!" cried Mrs. Palmer, hurrying from the pantry to the kettle which hung over the kitchen fire, all her reflections on the weakness and inconstancy of man for the time put to flight.

"Grace, Mr. Dudley's down stairs. My stars! how spruce you do look!"

Robert Palmer made this exclamation as he thrust his head into his sister's chamber, and she turned from the mirror, where she was putting the finishing touches to her hair, and confronted her brother. She seemed, in the candlelight, to be stepping out of a bright pink cloud, as the folds of her new dress fell about her; a background of warm, vivid colors best suited the girl's complexion. She was dressed very plainly; a small, snowy ruffle made a white spray about her neck, and she had wound a few sprays of wintergreen in her hair, and the red berries flashed like rubies among the green leaves.

"Will I *do*, Robert?" asked the girl, standing still a moment before her brother, for Grace had an unusual desire to look well this evening.

"Do?" said the boy, walking round his sister and surveying her with evident admiration; "why, Grace, I don't believe there'll be a girl there that can hold a candle to you."

"Oh, be still, now. I wanted to know if I did look decent." But a pleased smile on her lips told that the brother's genuine admiration had had its effect.

The old Mill Tavern presented a jubilant spectacle, for

thirty-five couples gathered under its roof that night, brimming with youth and high spirits; and the long room, where two generations had so often danced into the dawn, shook once more under quick glancing feet. To Grace Palmer it seemed one of the happiest evenings of her life—one whose pleasant visions shone down through the grey mists of the years, and amid whose scenes, and events, and feelings, her memory used to linger when she went up to the east windows of her life and looked off to the land of her youth.

How fair she looked, with the sparkle in her eyes and the glow on her cheeks! No wonder rustic hearts throbbed with envy as they saw the Parson's graceful nephew, and yet they were all compelled to bestow a grudging admiration on the fine appearance he made when he danced with the Deacon's daughter.

Grace was in constant demand that night; and she was too obliging to refuse to go through a single "reel" with any of her rustic admirers; for they were all either the playmates of her infancy or the friends of her youth.

The minister's nephew entered into the spirit of the occasion with great enjoyment, and won the smiles and admiration of a score of bright eyes and rosy lips with whom he danced and joked.

There was only one thing which, for a moment, threw a slight shadow over Grace's enjoyment that night, and that was when she encountered a glance from Richard Jarvys's eyes. There was something in their expression which affected her like a chill; but he smiled and bowed in his old cordial fashion, and Grace shook off the feeling, thinking she must have been mistaken in his look.

But Edward Dudley, with his quiet observation, had

seen what Grace did not—the start with which the young man recognised them both ; then the baleful, sinister glance which surveyed him rapidly from head to foot, and lighted on his partner in a manner which very plainly said that he had found the solution of some problem in which she was concerned.

“ Who is that man to whom you just bowed, Miss Grace ? ” asked Edward Dudley, as soon as Richard was engrossed with his partner in the dance.

“ Oh, that was Mr. Jarvys ; his father lives in the old stone house, half a mile beyond ours, on the public road. You may have seen it ? ”

“ Yes ; is the young man a friend of yours ? ”

The question was so abrupt, that, remembering what had happened the afternoon before, Grace’s cheeks brightened a little ; and this, too, did not escape the penetrating eyes of Edward Dudley.

“ Oh, yes ; I have known Richard from a little boy, when he used to drag me on his sled to school ! ”

“ How curious that he should ask me ! ” thought Grace. “ I suppose it is because Richard Jarvys is decidedly the most gentleman-like person here. ”

And then she wondered to herself why she had not liked Richard Jarvys better ! He was so superior to any young men of the neighborhood ; she had had, for more than a year, a secret conviction that he was fond of her, and that the slight reserve in her manner alone prevented him from declaring it. And she could give no satisfactory reason why she had never been able to overcome this reserve towards Richard Jarvys, and why she had always been conscious of a faintly repellant feeling when in his society. Her father and mother both liked him, and would,

she knew, have favored his suit beyond that of any young man in the vicinity of her home.

"It is strange!" said Grace, standing by the window, after the dance was over, and thinking on these things.

"What is strange?" asked Edward Dudley, who had been translating some of these thoughts from the fair face, with the key to them which Richard Jarvys's glance had given him.

"Have I been talking to myself, Mr. Dudley? I beg your pardon!"

Just then the door into the dining-hall opened wide, and Mrs. Trueman, the buxom hostess of old Mill Tavern, stood smiling on her guests from the head of the table, on which she had expended a more than usual amount of culinary skill and taste. In the centre of the table was a snowy obelisk of frosted cake, flanked on either side with broiled chickens done to a dainty brown, and delicious slices of cold tongue, and ham rolled up into small brown hillocks; and at either end were the great wooden trenchers of apples, wearing the red, and russet, and gold into which the kisses of a whole summer had warmed them; and by their side were the pyramids of nuts and the great tankards of golden eider; and close at hand was what Mrs. Trueman regarded as the crowning glory of the feast—the rows of pies and tarts with the glow of Rhenish wine in their centres, pumpkins yellow as the golden-rod that flamed along the turnpike road every autumn, and mince pies with crusts just the rich shade of cream in Mrs. Trueman's china pitcher.

The hostess of old Mill Tavern was a favorite with everybody for miles around. She was a small, plump, well-preserved little woman, whose life had slipped off at least

forty-five of its birth-days. It did one good to see the bright, cheery smile of the widow; to hear her brisk, pleasant voice, that was like a draught of cool, fresh wind clearing up and vitalizing the air.

Mrs. Trueman was a stirring, shrewd, sagacious little woman, with a marvellous amount of ingenuity and "faculty" for turning her hand to anything, and a ready wit to meet any conjunction of circumstances. She was full of a magnetic, vitalizing sort of promptness and force, which every one felt who was brought in contact with her; and for nine years she had been the bustling, energetic successor of her husband, whose death was the heaviest blow that had ever fallen upon the warm, quick heart of Charity, the widow of Jonathan Trueman.

Two children had been born to them; Lucy, who was now nineteen, pretty and plump, with black eyes full of saucy laughter, and lips whose curves and dimples answered the eyes, and who was very much what her mother had been a score of years before her; and Nathaniel, who was two years younger than his sister, and took after his father, his mother said—a tall, slender, thoughtful youth, with a wonderful beauty and sweetness, and spirituality of expression.

The thirty-five couples poured out into the dining-room, and for the hour that followed there was nothing to be heard but the hums of happy voices, the peals of merry laughter, and the sharp clatter of the dishes, for the appetites of Mrs. Trueman's guests, whetted by four hours of violent exercise, did full credit to her supper.

Mrs. Trueman and Mrs. Palmer had been schoolmates in their youth, and although they lived two miles apart, a neighborly friendship and intimacy had always existed

between them, and this had been perpetuated by their daughters; so, at the close of the supper, little Lucy Trueman, whose sparkling black eyes had been brimming over with fun and enjoyment all the evening, made her way to Grace, and putting down her lips to her ear, whispered :

"Grace, I want to take the pattern of those sleeves of yours. They're just the prettiest things! Do come out into the kitchen. Ma'll want to see you, too."

"Mayn't I come, too, Miss Lucy?" interposed Edward Dudley, who, standing by Grace's side, for they had risen from the table now, caught the last part of the girl's whisper.

Lucy had danced with the minister's nephew twice that evening, and any slight embarrassment which she might first have experienced in the gentleman's presence, combined with his antecedents, had now quite vanished.

"Yes; come on," she answered, with her bright twitter of a laugh, which disclosed the dimples at the corners of her mouth. "I'll risk a scolding from mother if you'll promise to shut your eyes when you get there, for everything's at sixes and sevens now."

"Oh, I'll promise anything so you'll give me a free ticket to the kitchen," laughed the gentleman, as he followed the bright head.

Mrs. Trueman had just come into the room to give some orders respecting the "chiny," when, looking up, she encountered her guests as they entered the kitchen, marshalled by her daughter.

"Grace, I'm glad to see you. Oh, Lucy, what are you up to, bringing gentlemen into such a place!" was her somewhat ambiguous reception of the minister's nephew.

‘He wanted to come, mother, and I told him I’d risk a scolding from you; so here he is.’

“Yes, and I’m going to make myself at home, too, Mrs. Trueman,” laughed the young man, as he took a seat by the girls in that off-hand fashion which was the shortest road to Mrs. Trueman’s complaisance.

“There’s no use in sending you back now, as I see,” rejoined the hostess, with a glance round the wide old kitchen, which was in a state of general “topsy turvy.” “You must take us as you find us. Grace, you are looking very scrumptious this evening.”

“Yes, and I’m going to have the pattern of those sleeves for my new plaid,” and Lucy bustled up with a paper and a pair of scissors. “It won’t take you but a moment, will it, Grace?”

“Oh no, Lucy,” smoothing the paper on a corner of the table, while Mrs. Trueman informed her that she had just “got her chain-pattern quilt on, and wanted her mother to come over and pass the afternoon day after to-morrow.”

“Oh, Grace, I must show you my new present. Uncle Josiah brought it from London last week. You know that he’s a sea captain.”

“I locked it up in the old sideboard up stairs,” said her mother, slipping a small key from a dozen which hung suspended about her waist by a black ribbon. “You’re such a careless jade, Lucy, I didn’t dare to trust you with it.”

“Well, grandpa says I’m just as like you as two peas in pod,” retorted the merry girl, as she received the key from her mother’s hands and hurried up stairs.

At this moment Nathaniel presented himself at the kitchen door.

“Come here,” cried his mother, to the shy youth.

"Where have you been keeping yourself for the last hour? I noticed that you slipped away from the table."

"Well, mother, the last stage brought in the Boston papers, and I wanted to see the news from there, now Governor Gage has been planting his field-pieces on Boston Neck, and sent his troops up to the arsenal at Charlestown in the night and got possession of the gunpowder there."

"Did I ever see such a boy!" exclaimed the mother, lifting up both hands; but a glance of pride and love flashed down on the pale, beautiful face of the youth, for Nathaniel was the idol of Mrs. Trueman's heart; and this love was mingled with an unutterable yearning and solicitude which almost amounted to pain, for Nathaniel had been delicate from his boyhood, and his mother had that tremulous anxiety about him which intense concentrated affection is apt to feel for its object.

As Edward Dudley looked on the pale face, the high forehead with its delicate tracery of veins, and the dark blue eyes, full of thoughtful intelligence, he felt singularly drawn towards the youth.

"Matters look dark enough for the Colonies just now. If his Majesty's ministers are not frightened by our non-importation associations into opening the port of Boston once more, we shall all have to shoulder our muskets and go to her help."

"I'm ready to do it, sir, for one;" and the pale cheeks flushed, and the soft dark eyes flashed fire.

"No, no!" exclaimed the mother, and her heart leaped up into her tones and face. "I'll give up anything for my country; but I can't let my boy go to the war. He couldn't stand it."

"Yes, I could;" laughing up in her face. "I'd show

you, mother, that all your petting and coddling hadn't spoiled your boy for a soldier when the time came."

"Wall, it musn't ever come for *you*. Nathaniel's sot his mind on goin' to college, Mr. Dudley;" certain that this topic would strike a chord which would vibrate quickly in her boy's heart. "As you're just from New Haven, it's likely you can give him some information, for he's bent on goin' to Yale?"

The youth's face kindled into a quick glow of enthusiasm; and while Grace trimmed the corners of her sleeve pattern and chatted about the "folks at home" with Mrs. Trueman, the young collegian and Nathaniel were occupied in discussing the amount of Greek and Latin necessary to enter the Freshman class at Yale, and Nathaniel Trueman learned with unbounded delight that three months more hard study, added to his present knowledge of the dead languages, was sufficient to insure his admission into college. The mother entered into her boy's pleasure.

"I knew that all his porin' over his books ever since he was knee-high to a grasshopper ought to come to somethin'. As I told Mr. Nathan Hale, when I put him into the grammar school, I'd expected to make a good tavern-keeper on him; but natur' had cut him out for a scholar, and there's no use goin' again her."

Just then Lucy returned, carrying under one arm a small haircloth trunk thickly studded with brass nails. She placed this on the table, and unlocked it with an air of mysterious importance. She removed a stratum of snowy wool, and set out a couple of richly chased silver goblets, a tankard, a cream-jug, bowl, and small coffee-pot, all of the same material, the sides blossoming out in an exquisite chasing of vines, and flowers, and fruits.

"Haven't I got the best uncle in the world?" chatted the girl, as, amid exclamations of admiration, her guests took up the costly articles and examined them. "They must have cost at least five hundred dollars; but my uncle wrote that he wanted me to have something that I could keep for his sake as long as I lived. He is an old bachelor, you see, and I was named for the lady he was to have married, but who died a week before the day which was set for the wedding; and for her sake Uncle Josiah has gone mourning all the days of his life." And the bright face of Lucy Trueman looked grave for a moment.

"And as he never went to housekeeping himself, he thought he'd get our Lucy ready for it in time," subjoined her brother, with quiet humor.

The pretty, restless head was bridled and tossed with unutterable disdain:

"Get ready for housekeeping? Catch me!" cried Lucy Trueman. "I'm going to keep old maid's hall, and Uncle Josiah has just given me a setting out. You must come and see me, Mr. Dudley, and I'll bring out all my plate for the occasion."

"And let me have a cup of tea, when the tax is taken off?" answered the young man.

"Certainly you shall. But see here, you haven't seen the whole yet;" and she drew a small box from one corner of the trunk, and opening it, disclosed a pair of ear-rings—two large carbuncles, quaintly set in gold, and which caught the light and flashed it back in restless currents of flame from their burning hearts.

"Oh, Lucy, how beautiful!" exclaimed Grace, lost in admiration. "It's very hard to keep from envying you."

"It's the first and the last time you'll ever have a chance

to do that, dear Grace," throwing her arm with a quick, affectionate impulse around her friend; and as the two girls stood there, the fine delicate beauty of Grace's face and figure brought into vivid contrast with the warmth and vitality of Lucy's, Edward Dudley thought that it was a great pity that the picture could not be perpetuated.

"Why didn't you wear your rings to-night, Lucy?" inquired Grace, still occupied in admiring scrutiny of the burning pendants.

"Oh, didn't I want to, Grace! But you see I promised Uncle Josiah that I wouldn't put them on until my twentieth birthday, which is next New Year's; and I should as soon think of sewing on Saturday night as breaking my word to Uncle Josiah."

"If you go on in your present ways you'll come to that or something worse, Lucy," interposed her mother, half in jest, half in earnest.

"No I shan't, mother. I'm going to settle down into a sober-minded, steady-going woman, after I've sown my wild oats."

At this moment, the old clock in the kitchen interpolated a couple of sharp strokes betwixt the buzz of voices.

"Dear me!—what *will* our folks say!" exclaimed Grace. And she only waited to receive Mrs. Trueman's parting messages and to promise Lucy that she would come over and pass the day with her next week, and then started for her bonnet.

"How I have enjoyed this frolic," she said, as she walked home under the November starlight, with Edward Dudley. "I was never at a dance before in my life."

"Is it possible, Miss Grace?"

"Yes; you know father is a Deacon, and feels that his

family ought to set an example in these things; not that he thinks there is any actual harm in dancing, only life is too solemn and earnest to pass much of it in light enjoyment and pleasure; and when a man occupies a conspicuous religious stand-point he must sacrifice some amusements that he considers harmless for the sake of others, who will make them the chief aim and end of life."

"That is very good philosophy and religion," answered the young man, smiling down on the earnest face uplifted to his. "Your father is right and generous in his view, which is saying that he is ahead of his time; for our forefathers (praise to their memory!) certainly brought across the ocean something of the old asceticism of the Middle Ages; and we haven't quite got the chill and the shadow out of our lives yet; and we find its stark and frigid features in our religious, social, and domestic living. Self-denial, for self-denial's sake, is something that a loving God never desires of His children."

The gaze which drank in these words told the young man that his listener caught the true scope and spirit of his sentiment.

"I see that you must be right," she said, "though I never thought of it in this light before."

"And how did you get your father's consent to your attending this party?" queried the young man.

"Oh, Mrs. Trueman is an old friend of mother's, and father does not like to refuse me any pleasure that I have set my heart on."

They had reached Deacon Palmer's front gate now; Edward Dudley opened it and then took Grace's hand.

"I must bid you good-by, now," he said, "for a long time—several months, at least; for I am going off on my

surveying expedition, and it will be a long perplexing business."

He was watching her face intently now, and he saw the look of surprise, and then the shadow of disappointment which fell over it.

"Good-by; I had no idea you were going so suddenly, Mr. Dudley," answered the sweet voice.

It stirred the pulses away down in the heart of Edward Dudley.

"I am sorry to go, Grace, for one reason only"—and the little hand was tightened in his grasp. "But, as I cannot see you, I shall want to know something about you all this winter. Are you willing that I should write to you sometimes?—and if I do, may I be certain that my letter will have a reply?—or, am I bold to ask this?"

"No," said Grace, answering the last part of the question first, in the flutter of conflicting feelings. "But—but, Mr. Dudley, I never corresponded with a gentleman in my life, and you are so learned—so far above me——"

His hand, laid softly on her shoulder, checked her here.

"Don't say that, Grace; there is much which is highest and truest that I can learn of you."

She only shook her head; she had no words now.

"Well, if I write, you will let me know that my letters have reached you?"

"You shall know it, Mr. Dudley."

He loosed her hand.

"Good-bye, dear Grace." He bent down here, and there was a second edition of a scene which had occurred under the old apple-tree in the orchard.

Grace did not answer this time—"You are a minister's

nephew, Mr. Dudley"—and the stars were too far off to see the blushes in her cheeks as she went up to the house; but the key to the hall of purple and gold in the soul of Grace Palmer was turning slowly and silently in its lock.

CHAPTER IV.

THE winter had passed, and March, with the sound of a trumpet, had rolled off from the face of the earth the white flannels of February, and the soft air of that day in the first week of April was full of stir and expectation. The pulses of the earth had thrilled once more to the call of the sunshine. There was a faint puffing of light green on the lilac bushes, and a darker lining of grass by the sides of the farm fences where the sunshine fell warmest at noons; and Grace Palmer stood a moment at the open window in the early morning and listened to the song of the first robin in the peach-tree by her window, and her soul was glad, looking off as the face of the year did to the summer.

"Grace," called her father, at the foot of the stairs, "I want you to put Robert and me up a lunch this morning; we're goin' to clear up the land over at the Head."

"What are you going to do with the land at the Head, father?" asked the young girl, as she cut great squares of gingerbread and sliced the dried beef for her father's and brother's lunch.

"I'm goin' to turn it into a cornfield, daughter. God only knows how few of us 'll be left to sow our seed, tho', by next fall; for if times don't alter some, we'll have to turn our plough-shares and prunin'-hooks into swords to beat the Philistines."

"Father," exclaimed Robert, who had just entered the kitchen and caught the last part of this speech, "I've just got the white horse home, and while the blacksmith was shoeing her Squire Walters came along and said that he'd returned from Springfield, and he met old Colonel Putnam in the Hartford stage coming back from Boston. He's been off there on a visit."

"And what did the Colonel say, Robert?" asked Deacon Palmer, slipping his part of the lunch into his capacious coat-pocket.

"Oh, he says the boys have got the true war spirit in them; that Boston's getting worse off every day; for it's so close blockaded that they can't get provisions by land, and the country folks won't furnish them by water. The Squire said the Colonel had got the old fire of the French war alive and glowing in him. He's going to enlist recruits as fast as possible, and he says that he shall start for Boston with the first gun that's fired there."

"I hope that God has raised him up a Samson to deliver us from the hand of the enemy," solemnly subjoined the Deacon.

"I hope so. Here's your lunch, Robert. Don't forget to stop at the office after the stage gets in; there's a good boy."

This was added in an under tone, and with a little self-consciousness.

"Is it time for *him* to write again?" asked the youth, with a flash of fun lurking in his brown eyes.

"Don't ask any saucy questions; only do what I say, and you shall have a nice mince turn-over for supper to-night."

"I'll do it, Grace. You've bought me over now."

"Come, come, Robert; be spry, boy," called the voice of the Deacon, and the boy followed his father out of the house.

Grace watched her father and brother with an absorbed expression for a few moments, and then she went up stairs to her studies—for Grace Palmer had devoted all her spare moments during the winter to her books. A quiet change had been passing over the girl—one which was more easily felt than described. She was more self-sustained, thoughtful; there was a new softness and graciousness of movement, and speech, and manner, which would have made the Deacon's little daughter accepted in any social position to which circumstances might elevate her.

But these things were only the outward manifestation of inward growth and development; for Grace Palmer's being had been silently expanding and intensifying through all these months. The long letters which the weekly mail brought to her from the western part of the State had been full of stimulation and suggestion to the quick, responsive soul of Grace Palmer. She had pursued with eager avidity the studies those letters recommended; she had drunk and refreshed her soul at the great fountains which the authors of the Elizabethan era opened for succeeding generations; she had fed her thoughts with Shakspeare and Bacon, with Dante and Tasso, and enriched her mind with the great authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—Locke and Boyle, and Addison and Swift. And these letters in that broad, bold, running hand which Grace had learned so well, opening new avenues of thought and clearer and truer estimates of life and men and things, became in a little while her one great interest, around which all minor ones revolved. Not that they were pedan-

tic or homiletic letters. They were full of vivid pictures dashed off with rapid strokes of the writer's pen; they were vital with youth, and health, and a keen relish of humor—though this latter always flashed and played over a deep, strong background of grave and earnest thought and purpose; for Edward Dudley, while in college, and after two or three years of skeptical doubt, and struggle, and indecision, had at last settled the great aim of his life, and bowed his heart in deep and loving consecration to the Master whose Name he saw now was the one Hope and Help of a world lost in darkness and sin.

Edward Dudley was a resolute, self-sustained character, full of deep though not demonstrative enthusiasm; and with him there was no indecision or fluctuation after his heart was once settled in its Christian faith and hope. Of course he had all those high tides and ebbs of emotion which every consecrated heart undergoes amid the pressure and friction of life; but his faith and trust in the Love and Wisdom of the Father who had given his dearly beloved Son, that the world through Him might be saved, never wavered or grew dim; for religion with him was not an emotion but a principle. And this religion, of course, modified and softened the man. The great and solemn realities of human guilt and responsibility, of suffering, and of death and eternity, gave a certain undercurrent of thoughtfulness and gravity to his gayest moments, though he was by nature and cultivation the very antithesis of an ascetic.

He was liberal and broad-minded beyond his time, and, respecting every man's individuality, desired for himself and others a liberty of thought and action which would be likely to come into strong antagonism with those rigid features of Puritan religion and life which, as we gaze off

on them from a different era and through the long perspective of years, obscures for us much of their warmth, and truth, and beauty.

And such was Edward Dudley, the man into the fair and stately chambers of whose heart the sweet face of the Deacon's daughter had shined oftener than ever woman's did before, though he was accustomed to the society of the most accomplished and high-bred women of his age.

And that morning, while Grace Palmer sat in the sweet April sunshine absorbed in her studies, a scene was occurring less than a mile from her home which was to throw a sudden darkness over it, and overshadow several of the brightest years of her youth.

"Richard," said Mr. Jarvys the elder, looking up from some old documents which he had been intently investigating for the last hour, "your bones are spryer than mine; I wish you'd go up stairs and find that old deed of the South Meadow and land adjoining which belonged to your great-uncle Joseph, and which he left to me; I haven't seen it for years. Open the big drawer of the secretary in my room, and there are several small ones on the right hand; you'll find the deed in one of those."

"I'll go for it, father, if you'll put it in your will for me," laughed the young man, as he laid down his paper.

"Ah, Dick, you're a lucky dog!" added the elder man, as his son went towards the door. "An only son, with a father that's scraped and toiled all his life to leave you a fortin' made to hand." And the old man settled the bows of his silver spectacles on his wide nose and resumed his scrutiny of the documents.

A flash of exultation went over the young man's face as

he heard these words. Then he remembered that all this wealth could not purchase the heart and hand of the one woman that he courted, and the exultation vanished into one of sullen bitterness.

Mr. Jarvys, the elder, had a shrewd, keen pair of eyes, under shaggy grey eyebrows; and these keen, sharp eyes were endorsed by the character and expression of his whole face. His thin locks of iron-grey hair curled tightly about his head, and his forehead wore the deep wrinkles of four-score years. Mr. Ralph Jarvys had the reputation of being a peculiarly sharp business man, one who could not be over-reached in a bargain; and an acute observer would have penetrated the man's true quality at once; the grand aim of his whole life was to make money and to increase what he had; and he valued himself solely not for what he was, but for what he had got.

Still, Ralph Jarvys did not present the most repellant features of a miser to those with whom he was brought in daily contact. He was liberal enough in his own household, and, indeed, took no small degree of pride in its appointments and his general style of living, feeling that these illustrated his wealth and importance.

He was fond of a rough joke, too, and not utterly indifferent in his love of gain to the opinions of his fellow-men; but, for all this, he was a hard, grasping, selfish man; one who, though he never transgressed the laws, pressed them to their utmost limits in his own favor, and exacted the last dollar from those who were in his power.

Richard was absent so long that his father glanced up impatiently several times towards the door before his son presented himself. When he did, it was with a look full of eagerness and wonder.

"Father," he commenced, "I've come across something up stairs whose existence I fancy that you didn't suspect. It's an old title-deed of my great-grandfather's."

"Where did you find it, Dick?" said the old man, peering at the yellow sheet of paper which his son held before him.

"Why, you see, I searched among all the small drawers for that old deed of my great-uncle's. I found it in the top one at last, and as I drew it out, I struck the knob of another small drawer just at the side of this. I opened it out of curiosity, and drew forth this musty old paper. You can tell better than I whether it's good for a sixpence."

Ralph Jarvys seized the paper as his son laid it on the table. He read it over three times carefully without speaking. Then he looked up to his son and brought down his clenched hand on the table. His hardest, greediest look was on his face now—a look which made it repellant.

"Dick," he said, "you've put a new fortin' into my hands this mornin'?"

"Is that so?" asked Dick, with an eagerness which duplicated his father's. "Don't you think they can produce a bill of sale?"

"There's the rub. If old Mrs. Comfort Palmer hasn't got any proofs in her possession that the land was sold to her husband's father, every rod of the Deacon's farm is my own; here it is, in black and white," and he slapped the yellow document defiantly.

A flash of malicious triumph went over Dick's face.

"I always knew," pursued Ralph Jarvys, taking off his spectacles and wiping his eyes, "that there was a hitch somewhere in the sale of that ere land, for it was never recorded, and it belonged to my grandfather. He and

the Deacon's grandfather died about the same time, and the farm went into the Palmer family."

"But how did the land fall into the Palmers' hands, anyhow?" asked Dick, who was shrewd enough to perceive that his father's indefinite statement must have left out some very important facts.

"There was always a mystery hanging about that," hitching his chair round a little uneasily. "I remember hearing my father say, that in the last talk which his father had with him afore he died, he told him that his land adjoining South Farm was all fair and square made over to old David Palmer. That must have been nigh upon sixty-five years ago."

"But I'm sure I've heard you say that this David Palmer rendered your grandfather a great service—saved his life somehow?"

"Wall, he did; though that's nothin' to do with the case in hand, as I see. The old gentleman was comin' home one night and crossin' the river with his ox team, when the ice broke and he fell in, and would have drowned if old David Palmer hadn't heard his shrieks from the shore, and made his way over the ice to him and dragged him out."

"And perilled his own life to do it, I 'spose?" still further interrogated Richard, who was determined to penetrate the facts of the case.

"Likely enough—likely enough," answered the old man concisely, as though it was not a very agreeable admission.

"Well, did your father believe that his father had sold the land fair and square to this old David Palmer?" pursued Dick, in a species of cross-questioning which was becoming more and more annoying to his father.

"Wall, what if he did, boy—what if he did! Law has nothing to do with 'supposings' and 'maybes,' and a man must look out for the side his own bread is buttered on. I've only, like the law, to deal with the hard facts in the case; and if this 'ere document says that ere land is mine—I'll have it, that's all, spite of any man," and he concluded this speech, as one who expressed its sentiment would be likely to—with an oath.

Richard Jarvys had no solid principles of life or conduct; and, like the mass of men of this kind, he could easily be persuaded by the boldest sophistry into a mean, craven, base action. But he was in his youth still; and his instincts for truth, and right, and honor, had not been wholly indurated by a long life of greed and selfishness.

His better impulses could for the moment be stimulated into admiration of a generous or noble act; and at first they revolted at the dishonor and dishonesty which his father's course of procedure would involve in the matter under discussion; for the young man entertained no doubt in his own mind that the land whose title-deed his father held justly belonged to David Palmer and his heirs, however the proofs of possession might be wanting on their part; and his answer was in accordance with this belief.

"But you see, father, if your grandfather actually stated on his death-bed that the land belonged to the Palmers, and this David saved him from drowning at the peril of his own life, it wouldn't look quite like the right thing to make them any trouble at this late time."

"You talk like a very young man, Dick," answered his father, with a great deal of condescension in his manner. "When you've lived to be as old as I am, you'll be a little wiser, and you'll have more faith in a little money than

anything else in the world. Every man must look out for himself or he'll soon be kicked under; and I've studied human natur' a good deal in the course of my experience, and I've found that I'm no worse than the rest of men in this thing, though there's plenty that make great professions; but come to sound 'em, they're all alike—selfish at the bottom!"

Richard Jarvys had no deep moral consciousness to rise up and refute this sweeping condemnation of humanity; so he put in a lame, wavering sort of objection, which was virtually coming over to his father's position.

"Well, I don't know but you're more than half right in all you've said; but it has a sort of hard, mean look, to make the Palmers trouble under the circumstances."

"We mustn't be too squeamish about 'looks' in this world, Richard, if we expect to make our way in it. As for the 'trouble,' that's something we can't help. Folks never'd get their rights if they al'ays stopped for the 'trouble' it was goin' to bring on others."

"How soon shall you make this matter known to the Palmers?" pursued Richard, for he evidently felt a keen interest in the subject, though his parent had no suspicion of the cause.

"This very morning, Dick, I shall go and have a talk with Deacon Palmer afore noon. It'll take him mightily by surprise."

"Yes, it'll take down the pride of the whole family a peg," and the younger Jarvys rubbed his hands as he pictured to himself the distress and consternation of the young girl who had so lately refused his hand, and there was an expression on his face which one finds on a man's when he is rejoicing in something he feels is mean and contemptible.

* * * * *

"Why, father, what is the matter?"

"Don't be scared, child; I've had a poor turn to-day!"

Grace Palmer was "clapping" an embroidered collar which she had just immersed in a bowl of fine starch on the table. She dropped the collar and ran towards her father, for she saw at once something had happened to him, and the rose-buds were quite frightened out of her cheeks as she assisted him to his arm-chair by the fireside, and the old man leaned his stalwart frame on the young girl as he moved slowly and feebly across the kitchen.

"Dear father—do tell me how it happened! Is it anything serious? What can I do for you?"

"Don't be frightened, daughter. Run down and draw me a glass of cider; that'll kind of set me up, like."

Mrs. Palmer was with her husband when Grace returned with the cider, for she had met her mother on the way to the cellar and paused to say, "Father's got back. He's had a dreadful poor turn to-day," and this laconic information had sent Mrs. Palmer to the kitchen in a tumult of apprehension.

"How did it come on, father? I never knew you to have such an attack since you was a young man and had the sun-stroke that hot day you was rakin' hay in the east meadow."

"This wasn't like that ere, Patience. It didn't come on of a sudden," and he took the glass of cider, and the great brown hand shook like a little child's as he carried it to his lips.

"You must have a mug of hot pepper-tea, and a mustard paste on your back. They're the best things for a chill or a faint turn," subjoined Mrs. Palmer, for her sympathies always took a practical form.

"Never mind that now, Patience. I shall get over it in a minute," and the Deacon put his hand to his head as though there was some pain or trouble there.

Mrs. Palmer's womanly intuitions could not be at fault long. She bent a searching gaze on the white face of her husband, and then exclaimed:

"Daniel, you've heard some bad news!"

"Don't speak on it now, mother," and he moved uneasily, and there was a groan which he tried to suppress in his voice.

Mrs. Palmer's suspicions were confirmed. The tremulous, shrinking heart of the little woman rose at once strong and brave to share whatsoever evil had fallen to the lot of her husband.

"Tell me what has come upon you, father?" she said, and her voice was one that would not easily be put off.

"I can't speak of it, wife—I can't;" and now there was sharp agony in the tones of Deacon Palmer, and he buried his face in his hands before his wife and daughter.

Mrs. Palmer took hold of her husband's arm, and the woman's heart fired her lips with unwonted eloquence, and she kept her voice brave and steady through the tumult of feeling which overswept her soul.

"Daniel," said the little woman, "I was a young inexperienced thing, with only eighteen years over my head, when you brought me under this roof for the first time, your lovin' wife, to share your heart and home. We've walked close together, Daniel, through the dark days and the bright ones for more than a score of years. We've borne together our great heartaches, when we laid down five of our children in the graveyard yonder, and thanked the Lord that if they was few on earth they was more in

heaven! And in all this time we've never had more than a moment's hard feelin' towards each other, or a trouble that both didn't share. And now, Daniel Palmer, haven't I been all this twenty years, and more too, a true and faithful wife to you?—too good a mother to your children for you to hold back from lettin' me bear my share of the trouble that's fallen upon you!"

Deacon Palmer was greatly moved; he looked up into the faded face of the brave little woman by his side, and, as the remembrance of all her thoughtful love and self-sacrifice swept over him, he felt that he still owned something which no lands or gold could buy in that one true heart. He put his arm around his wife.

"Patience," he said, "you've been the best and truest wife that ever God gave to a man. I wanted for your sake and the children's to bear the burden alone as long as I could; but the time must come for you to know, sooner or later, and maybe it's as well now as ever."

"Oh, father, let us know!" It was Grace's voice that pleaded now. And the Deacon yielded, and his family soon knew the whole truth.

It appeared that Ralph Jarvys had gone out to the Head, had an interview with the Deacon that morning, showed his title-deed to the land on which the Palmer homestead stood, and the fields and orchards adjoining it, and signified his intention of taking possession of the whole as soon as the law permitted. The Deacon was thoroughly appalled. As soon as he comprehended the matter, he asserted his legal ownership of the Palmer lands, and their lawful purchase sixty years before by his grandfather, David Palmer.

Richard Jarvys felt in his heart that he was committing a dishonest deed, and the only way was to carry it through

with a high hand ; he grew angry and insolent, defied the Deacon to produce any proofs of the sale of the Palmer farm by his grandfather ; affirmed that the purchase had never been recorded, and was never made in good faith ; and that he was the rightful owner of the lands, had the proofs in his possession, and the law would be obliged to give them to him ; and left in a great heat, after some insulting threats.

Deacon Palmer, moreover, averred that several weeks before he had had a singular dream, which had made a deep impression on his mind ; he seemed to be standing one evening in the front door of his dwelling, and looking off on his goodly acres, as they waved golden and white for the harvest, when his father suddenly appeared by his side.

"It is a fine old place," he said, "and you've taken good care of it, Daniel ; but look out that your title's secure, for it's all yours, as it was your father's and grandfather's before you."

This dream had recurred to the Deacon several times with such force that, on his last visit to his mother, he had had a long talk with her respecting the sale of the Palmer farm.

She recalled all the circumstances vividly, having been married about two years when the sale occurred. It took place one evening, in her own house, some two weeks subsequent to the time when her husband's father had rescued Samuel Jarvys from drowning, for he must certainly have perished had he remained three minutes longer under the ice ; and the cold which David Palmer took at this time cost him his life two months later. Mrs. Palmer recalled the conversation which passed between the two men before the sale was consummated, though this had previously been contemplated by the two parties.

"There is no time like the present," said Samuel Jarvys, "as you and I knew two weeks ago this very night; and as you've saved my life, friend Palmer, you shall have the two hundred acres lying between Mullen Hill and Roaring Brook for three hundred dollars, and it 'll stand for a remembrance of what you did for me to our children after us."

David Palmer had objected to the price of the land, saying it would bring double that sum; though Mrs. Palmer could remember it was at that time a tract of uncleared land.

Mr. Jarvys had checked her father-in-law. "Don't offer another word there, neighbor Palmer. If I was a rich man you should have every rood of it in remembrance of the great debt that I owe you. But I can save myself for three hundred, and for that sum you shall have it."

"It's a bargain, neighbor," said David Palmer.

Mr. Jarvys seemed for some reason anxious to conclude the matter that night, and after the bill of sale was drawn up, Mrs. Comfort Palmer had summoned from the kitchen a couple of neighbors who put their names as witnesses to the paper. She had herself been called from the house at this time by the illness of a neighbor, and when she returned, a couple of hours later, Mr. Jarvys was on the point of leaving.

"Well, neighbor," he said, shaking the hand of his friend, "the land is yours and your heirs for ever now, and to-morrow I will call for you, and we'll go up to the centre and have it recorded."

Mr. Jarvys showed the bill of sale to his daughter-in-law after he returned from the hall, whither he had gone with

his guest, and said he should proceed at once to clear the land, and lay it out in pastures and wheat-fields ; and if his life was spared, he might build a house, selecting for its site the very ground on which the homestead now stood.

That night, however, David Jarvys went to the bed from which he never again rose, and the bill of sale was not recorded. His entire property fell to his son, the father of Daniel, for the old man died without making a will.

Mrs. Palmer recollected having seen the bill of sale in her husband's possession twenty years later, only a few weeks previous to his death, and promised the Deacon that she would at once institute a search for it.

As soon as Richard Jarvys had left, the Deacon had started for his mother's, foreseeing that if the bill of sale could not be produced, it was in the power of Richard Jarvys to occasion him great trouble, and perhaps eject him from the old homestead and the soil on which he had expended the strength and toil of his life.

The Deacon's heart failed him when he learned from his mother that a most thorough search had failed to produce the bill of sale, and he had started off in a terrible tumult of feeling, when he was suddenly seized with a strange dizziness and chilliness, and could only with difficulty stagger home.

"If it had come years ago, when I was fresh and strong," said the old man, "I could have made headway against it; but it's fallen heavily on my old age. I can't stand the thought of leaving the old home where I was born and brought up, and which has grown to be a part of my life;" and he glanced around the old kitchen with a kind of sorrowful tenderness which it was pitiful to see.

"Oh, father!" interposed Grace, who had eagerly drunk in every word of her father's story—"you won't have to

leave the old homestead ; Ralph Jarvys can't get it away from you."

"I don't know, my child. He is an unprincipled, selfish man, and there is no doubt that he will push matters to the utmost extremity of the law."

"And all of this trouble might have been saved if the bill of sale had been recorded?"

"All of it, Grace; or if either of the two men who witnessed the sale were alive now; but they are both dead, and we have only strong circumstantial evidence to oppose to Ralph Jarvys's title-deed. It was a great oversight in my father that the matter was left so; but you know, Patience, he was an easy sort of man, and believed all men as honest as himself."

"We must trust the Lord with this whole matter, Daniel. He isn't goin' to desert us in our old age."

"That's well put in, wife; I must cast the burden of all this care upon Him. But it's hard—it's hard to bear now." And the Deacon buried his face in his hands. His wife and daughter had never seen him so broken down before.

The two women did all they could to comfort the old man with kind and loving words and tender ministrations, but the hearts of both were heavy as they looked off to the future, and feared the wrong and suffering which it might have in store for them; and the fair April day closed around the home of Deacon Palmer as no April day had ever done before.

Then Robert, who knew nothing of what had happened, broke into his sister's chamber, sure that he was the messenger of good tidings, and with a boyish-love of sport, whirled a letter above her head, crying:

"Guess what I've got here?"

A rift of light pierced the shadows that lay heavily on the young heart at that sight. The brother and sister had a merry chase and struggle after the letter, and Grace read it over twice in the fading light, and when she laid it down there was a new brightness on her face.

"He is coming next week," she said.

CHAPTER V.

THIS morning of which I write, Grace Palmer had gone into the barn to search for new-laid eggs. She had found a dozen in the warm, dry hay, and with that fine insight which makes all beauty tributary to it, she gazed admiringly on the eggs as they lay in her small basket like large, oval buds, waiting for the sunshine to unloose them into great white cups of blossoms. During the week which lies between the close of the last chapter and the opening of this, the spring had been very busy, doing great work with sunshine and south winds. The lilacs and the apple trees were puffed thick with tender green leaves, the seams of grass by the fences had developed into dark breadths, and the pulses of the earth were throbbing with new hope and strength, for life had overcome death, and spring had vanquished the winter. The sunshine of that April morning burnished the rafters of the old barn, and kindled the pile of hay into a golden pyramid, and was like a poet inspiring with beauty every homely object which it touched and glorified.

Grace Palmer's heart opened all its doors to these sweet influences, and the shadow which had been like a winter chill on all its youth and gladness for the past week, was exercised by the spring morning.

She stood in the side door of the old barn, and the face of the earth and the face of the girl answered each other

as a poem sometimes does the air it is set to. In each was light, and joy, and expectation. The year looked off to its future as Grace looked off to hers, and read alike the prophecy. The sweet mouth was touched with a light which just escaped pronouncing itself in a smile, and gave a subtle brightness to the whole face like the sunset atmosphere which suffuses a painting, and inspired the sweet blue eyes looking off to the hills.

And as Grace stood in the barn door with her basket of eggs, a rider on horseback drew up before the gate of Deacon Palmer's dwelling. He alighted hastily and walked up to the front door; but there was no response to his summons, for Mrs. Palmer had gone over to her nearest neighbor's after some new recipe for cake, and the visitor was evidently somewhat impatient, for at last he ventured cautiously round to the back door. The footpath to the kitchen brought him in full view of the barn, and he caught a glimpse of the burnished head in the door. He stole softly round to the front of the barn, and stood a moment where he could get a full view of Grace's profile standing out soft and clear from its brown background.

"Grace!" he said, softly.

She turned her head.

"Mr. Dudley!" Her face spoke a radiant welcome, after the first shock of surprise, and the deep crimson of the cheeks had to say all the lips could not.

"I didn't intend to steal a march on you, and went up to the front door in orthodox visiting fashion and knocked three times; and getting no answer, started round for the kitchen and caught the first glimpse of my hostess in the barn door."

Grace's laugh combined with her guest's, the silvery jets

flashing in and out of his like a bright thread round a strong root.

"I came out here to search for eggs. It seems to be my fate, Mr. Dudley, that you shall come upon me in just the circumstances where I should never think of expecting you."

"And those are just the places where I like to see you. But it is not my fault if I have encountered you at the churn and in search of the chickens."

"No; Benny's shoulders must bear the first blame; and I ought to have been in the house when you knocked; but the day spoke to me, and I paused a moment to listen."

They were going slowly up to the house now, and Grace looked up timidly into the face by her side. It was a potent face, a little sun-browned by exposure, but well cut, with a subtle harmony of feature and expression. It was a thoughtful, pleasant, manly face—one to believe in, that met you with frank, clear, steady eyes, whose gaze told you that their owner would be true to himself, and, being that, would be true to all men besides.

Mrs. Palmer's look of astonishment was amusing, when she saw Grace enter the kitchen with her guest.

"Where did you come from?" she asked, before recovering herself sufficiently to shake hands with her guest.

"From the barn, where I found your daughter beguiled by this spring day. Mrs. Palmer, I have ridden thirty miles since the sun rose, to take dinner with you, if I have an invitation."

"Of course you have, Mr. Dudley. Take him right into the front room, Grace;" slipping a skein of blue yarn from the backs of a couple of chairs which occupied the centre of the kitchen, and already seeing in her imagi-

nation a couple of denuded and dismembered chickens broiling above the bright red coals on the hearth.

"Have you had a happy winter and spring?" asked the young man, as soon as he was seated in the parlor.

A shadow stole into the girl's face.

"Yes, mostly," she said. "And you, Mr. Dudley?"

"Oh, I've had a capital time. This living out doors and turning into a savage, is just what I needed after seven years' devotion to Greek, Latin, Philosophy, and Mathematics. I've gained twenty pounds since I last saw you, and can offer some good tough muscle to my country when she needs it, as I believe she will before May fills your lilacs out here with blossoms."

"Oh, Mr. Dudley, do you really think it must come to *that* so soon?"

"I don't see now how it can be avoided. Every time the stage comes in I look for the tidings that the first blow has been struck at Boston for the freedom of our Colonies—and that blow will send the voice of a trumpet throughout the land, calling upon every man to set his face valiantly towards the camp and do good service for his country; and Grace, when the first man falls, it will be my summons to go!"

"Oh, I hope, even at this late hour, that God will interpose and avert this terrible war from our land! 'The time of the singing of birds has come;' and I have taken these fair spring days as the year's olive branches of peace, and hoped that every ship which comes in from England will bring us tidings of a change wrought in the hearts of her king and her parliament, just as the south winds bring us tidings from the summer."

"God grant it may be so, oh fair interprestress of times

and seasons. But what if you have read the vision wrongly, and God sends us the sunshine and the singing of birds as a token of His love while the darkness and the storms fill our moral atmosphere?"

"Then we will accept the sign still, and follow it through the wilderness, knowing that the people whose 'God is the Lord, must triumph sooner or later, because that good is greater than evil, and God stronger than Satan.'"

The young man slipped his hand over and covered the hand of Grace Palmer. It was a small, soft hand, though it was skilful in all the range of housewifery, and had been familiar with every kind of domestic labor.

"I like to hear you talk so," said Edward Dudley. "I know now, Grace, that you have laid the foundations of your principles in truth and justice. And when man or woman chooses these, they have settled the great question of life—they are at rest; the atmosphere clears itself up about them, their judgment is sound, and they do not see things through a cloud of misapprehension, and are not governed by fitful impulses and imaginations."

Their conversation did not go on altogether after this grave fashion, as they sat by the open window that April morning—Grace with some embroidery in her hand, for industry was become a habit with her. Their talk went right and left, touching a thousand subjects, and was sprinkled all over with keen jests, and flashes of mirth and of humor, though Edward Dudley's character was "drawn on a grave reserve." Grace's reading and studies formed a prominent topic of the conversation; and Mrs. Palmer interpolated herself occasionally during the time for courtesy's sake—now bringing her skein of yarn to wind, now putting her anxious face inside the door to consult Grace

about the dinner, and whether mince pie or baked Indian pudding had better succeed the broiled chicken.

"It's lucky enough that I saved that last bottle of currant wine," murmured the busy woman, as she turned the various members of two chickens on the gridiron. "What a nice brown that chicken is coming to. Dear me! To think I'm to have the minister's nephew here to dinner and father away, and there's no knowin' whether he's used to askin' a blessin'. How he did come in too—jist like one of the family. It's evident enough he's struck; I've felt this ever since them letters began to come; but Grace has been shy as a young colt about speakin'. But there's no use in placin' any dependence on anything in this world, now-a-days. There's that business of Jarvys's!"—and Mrs. Palmer concluded her monologue with a sigh and a solemn shake of the head, and proceeded to lay the table-cloth for dinner.

Mrs. Palmer told her husband afterwards that Edward Dudley almost beat his uncle at the blessing he invoked at the dinner that day.

The trio lingered long around that dinner-table in the old kitchen, and the broiled chicken floated in a golden sea of gravy; the mince pie, with its white ruffling rising like small hillocks around the white lake of crust; the Indian pudding, whose mellow heart Mrs. Palmer cleft with the merciless skill of a surgeon—would have allayed any appetite sharpened by a ride of twenty-five miles; and Grace and her mother were entertained with such droll accounts of the young traveller's first experience in the wilderness that they were several times fairly overcome with laughter. And that dinner became afterwards to each one like a light shining down through storm and darkness,

and their memories went back and sat again in sweet visions around the old cherry table in the kitchen at Deacon Palmer's.

They had just arisen, and Grace was about returning to the parlor with her guest, when Robert burst into the kitchen. The boy's face was white, and he panted for breath as though some sudden evil tidings had fairly swept speech and sense away from him.

"Have you heard?" gasped the boy.

"No; anything happened to your father or Benny?" exclaimed his mother, her heart instantly taking alarm.

"No, it isn't that. They've just got word that we've had a battle!"

"Who was victor? Speak quick, Robert!" cried Edward Dudley, with a sharp ring in his voice which told one how much lay behind the words.

"The first blood was spilt at Lexington. Eight of our men fell there, and the rest were put to flight. But when the British set out for Boston, our men had the best of it. The yeomanry hurried in from all around the country, and hid themselves behind the trees and the fences, and took good aim, and made the red-coats pay a round price for them eight men that lay dead on the field at Lexington!" and a flash of joy went over the boy's face, and it was answered by three others.

"Go on, boy; go on!" cried Edward Dudley, making a strong effort at self-control.

"Well, Lord Percy came up at last with a brigade, for he had been sent from Boston in the morning by General Gage to aid the British. He went through Roxbury gay enough, marching to the tune of Yankee-Doodle, to incense our men. But he was taken down when he got up with

the troops, and found they'd almost given up. They had hot work both sides on the retreat. Our men kept up a sharp firing, and the British revenged themselves by burning and plundering houses, and making all the havoc that they could along the road. Lord Percy came near being killed himself, and near Prospect Hill our men did their best work, and didn't bring up till they got to Charlestown Common."

"What was their loss?"

"Seventy-three killed of theirs, and ours forty-nine."

"The first blow has been struck," said Edward Dudley. "Every true patriot has but one straight way before him, and that leads to the Continental army at Boston. I shall take it to-night."

"Our men are hurrying up. There's a company going to start before sundown. Oh, mother, I must go with them!"

"Wait, Robert, until you've got a little stouter muscles and stronger arms to give to your country," interposed Edward Dudley. "We shall want you in good time; only have patience."

"Shall you really go to-night, Mr. Dudley?" Grace tried to keep her voice steady along the words, but it played her traitor, and sank and failed her before she got through.

"Where else should I go, Grace, when my country calls like this? You will give me your 'God speed' before I start?"

She looked up in his face and tried to fashion the words, but her lips played her false again; for a great sob palpitated in her throat, and, trying to swallow it back, the tears strained into her eyes. The sight of them moved the soul

of Edward Dudley as it had never been moved before. He led his hostess into the parlor, and, sitting down on the old-fashioned lounge mounted with brass-headed nails, he said to her :

“ Grace, it is a strange time to speak the words which I have carried in my heart for you through all the winter ; but now that I am going away to offer my life for my country, I have but one gift left, and that is for the woman : that I love ; Grace Palmer, will you take the heart that I give you ? ”

The gift had come in too trying an hour. No shrinking of natural timidity moved the soul of the listening girl. The hand which Edward Dudley held lay still in his, and long, slow sobs only answered him.

“ Grace, you will not let me go like this ; you will let me know whether I have a right to carry you, tender and beloved, through whatever of weal or woe lies before me in this war, whose end no man can foresee ? ”

There was a wild throb of joy in the heart of Edward Dudley, for the fingers he grasped tightened on his when he next ceased to speak.

“ Dear Grace ! ”—he drew his arm about the sobbing girl—“ look up with your steady eyes and your brave heart, and give me courage. Let me hear you say : ‘ For life or for death ! ’ ”

“ For life or for death ! ” It came underneath her breath, but steady, clear, and strong ; and then her sobs grew quiet as the significance of that solemn betrothal came over her.

It lifted them both out of all ordinary range of feeling and emotion into a fine exaltation of sacrifice. They looked out of the east windows to no land of love and promise

such as youth loves to dwell on; no fair home shone a sweet picture down the long, flowery perspective of the visions of Edward Dudley and Grace Palmer.

This betrothal was sanctified by a deep and mighty sorrow, for each felt that a separation was close at hand which might be eternal; and they sat together for an hour in solemn joy and sorrow, and their souls were before God! At the end of this time the Deacon and his wife entered the room. The face of the former had grown half-a-score of years older since Edward Dudley saw it in the autumn. The old man and the young one shook hands almost in silence, for the tidings they had heard overwhelmed for a time the strongest.

There was a flash of joy through the hearts of the aged couple when they understood the true state of things; but the congratulations and blessings struggled up through hearts heavy with doubt and fears. Then came the leave-taking, and the Deacon and his wife judiciously left their daughter alone at this trying crisis with the man into whose keeping she had committed her sweet womanhood.

"I must go now. Be a brave girl, my darling!"

He saw she would be when he looked at her face, exalted with enthusiasm and self-sacrifice until it seemed to Edward Dudley that the face of Grace Palmer was the face of an angel.

They stood together in the front door. He looked down on the hand which he held, and he slipped his fingers over the soft palm in a mute caress.

"It's a little hand, Grace," he said, "delicate and responsive."

"But it can hold fast for life or for death!" she said.

"And if, darling—if I should never come back to you,

but find my grave off there on some battle-field, doing my duty, you would not let the storm blight your whole life; you would remember, when the first sharp grief had passed away, that I had only gone first, and every night would bring you nearer to me."

The storm went over and shook her for a moment; how could it be otherwise, for her heart was the heart of a woman!

Then she lifted up her face. "I would remember it, Edward—living or dead we shall never be apart!"

"Never apart!" he repeated, and they both smiled in solemn exultation at that thought.

A small ringlet, through which glimmered a light like gold, had drifted over Grace's ear. The young man seized a pair of shears which lay on the window-sill and severed the ringlet. "I must take so much of you with me, Grace!"

Her eyes said that he would take more than that.

"Good-bye, Grace, my beloved! With the one Love greater than mine leave I thee!"

"Good-bye, Edward, my soldier. God go with you; and oh! God bring you back to me!"

These last words slid up in a groan from the girl's heart, and she knew it found a deep echo in another's—deep though silent, for there were no more words here, only a long silent gaze which drank in each face, and so they went apart; he, as man always has, for the stir and bustle of the camp, the wild excitement and fierce charge of the battle-field; and she for the slow, weary days in the silence of her home, for the bitter tears, and wasting heart-aches and prayers that have worn away the long sleepless nights.

The path which Edward Dudley took, after leaving the

Deacon's, led through a half mile of dense woods out into the turnpike, and past the old Mill Tavern. As he drew near this he suddenly encountered Nathaniel Trueman, who was hurrying towards the house. The two young men shook hands, and each read the thought which filled the heart of the other.

"Are you going?" asked Nathaniel.

"In two hours I shall start."

"So shall I," said Nathaniel, a look of deadly resolve on the young, beautiful face.

"Can you stand it?" asked his friend, solicitously. "You look so young and slender, and we shall have a hard life and hot fighting."

"The harder and the hotter the greater reason I should be in the midst of it. No, Mr. Dudley; I know I'm young and not very stout yet; but what I am, that I give to my country."

Edward Dudley looked on the young face; this was no glow of boyish enthusiasm which would vanish before the severe ordeals to which it must soon be subjected. The youth's voice had the true ring about it, and his face spoke for him.

Edward Dudley's soul was moved towards Nathaniel Trueman; he grasped his hand vehemently. "Brother soldier," he said, "we will go together. We will share one fate, whatever it be."

The face of Nathaniel was radiant.

"When shall I meet you?" he said.

"In two hours, at my uncle's gate." And the two young men grasped each other's hands and parted in silence.

Nearly two hours later, Nathaniel Trueman stood at the kitchen door of the old tavern, with a small bundle slung

across his shoulder, and his mother was crowding down into the pocket of his greatcoat something carefully tied up in thick brown paper.

"I mustn't wait another minute—come, mother—Lucy, give me a last kiss and your blessing," said the youth, and his tones answered to his face; there was a little unsteadiness and pain in both, and in both a fixed and rooted purpose which nothing could shake.

Lucy came out of the pantry, the sweet roses all frightened out of her cheeks; she laid her face up softly against her brother's. "Oh, Nathaniel!" and the rest was lost in a sob.

"Come, now, this won't do for a soldier's sister, Lucy. I want a smile instead of a sob, and a God-speed instead of a groan. Wait until I come back with a plume in my cap and epaulettes on my shoulders, and you'll be proud then of your soldier brother."

And Lucy tried to smile, but it was a poor, faint result, little better than failure. "God take care of you, Nathaniel, little brother." It was the old pet name, when the boy and girl used to go hand in hand through the low pastures to school; no wonder it faltered and fell in a groan, heavy with all its burden of old, sweet memories. Nathaniel was obliged to put up with it. He kissed the round cheeks fervently half a dozen of times, and then turned to his mother.

Mrs. Trueman had been mostly silent for the last hour, saying only what was absolutely necessary in the way of making preparations for her son's departure, and going about quietly and seeing that everything was done for his comfort that the brief time allowed. It is true that she came very near dropping on the floor when he first en-

tered and briefly announced his resolve to start for the camp in less than two hours.

And she had met this determination of her son's with settled but brief opposition. She had tried argument and entreaty, but she had been borne down by a will stronger than her own, and Mrs. Trueman was quite too sensible a woman to pursue her opposition where she saw that it would be of no avail; and she at once set herself to work, the pale face and compressed lips only telling of the struggle going on within her heart.

"Mother, won't you say what Lucy has?" asked the youth.

Mrs. Trueman put her arms about her boy's neck :

"Oh, my boy, if anything should happen to you, your mother never would lift up her head again in this world! Remember, you're all she's got, and she loves you better than life a thousand times, and there won't be a minute of the day or night in which her thoughts won't go after you; and sometimes she'll wake up in the night, darlin'; and see her pretty boy lyin' white and cold on the battle-field, and the little shinin' rings of hair she used to twine round her fingers all tangled up and red with blood, and there won't be anybody to tell her it isn't true. Oh, Nathaniel, what will your mother do then!" and she clung to him, shuddering.

No wonder the heart of the boy of seventeen failed him for a moment. A sob came up in his throat, and there flashed across him a doubt whether his duty to his mother was not greater than his duty to his country; and his answer, when he could speak, revealed the conflict in his thoughts.

"Mother," said Nathaniel Trueman, "don't talk of that;

God can take care of me on the battle-field as well as under your roof; but if you can't give me your blessing, and if you believe that my father, who has left me to take his place to you, would say to me, 'Nathaniel, stay with your mother, for you're all she's got in my stead,' I won't go this day."

Mrs. Trueman looked up and her heart smote her, for she knew the struggle these words must have cost her son, and she felt that if his father had been alive that day he would have done just what Nathaniel was doing. She did not dare to speak the one word which would have kept him; and when the short, sharp struggle of the mother-heart was over, she answered:

"No, Nathaniel; it's givin' up more than my life; but I see your heart's bent on goin', and God go with you and cover your head in the day of battle, my boy—my sweet, pretty boy, Nathaniel!"

There was no time for more words. She put her arms about the young neck again; she hugged the slender form to her heart with a long, greedy strain, and then the mother and sister were alone.

Mrs. Trueman sat down and covered her face with her hands. There was no word spoken, and the sobs of Lucy were low and deep, shaking the little plump figure to and fro like a storm. But suddenly her mother bounded from her chair and rushed out of the door, and down to the garden gate. She saw the light, rapid figure some distance up the turnpike, and in a moment a bend in the road would have hid it from view.

"Nathaniel, Nathaniel!"

The loud, eager call swept down the road and caught the youth.

"You'll find the mince-pie, and the gingerbread, and the crullers, in your hinder pocket, under the blue woollen stockin's; mind, now."

"I'll remember, mother."

The voice came back clear and cheerful on the soft April winds; but as Nathaniel turned, he brushed something from his eye which no soft April winds had persuaded there.

CHAPTER VI.

"RICHARD," said Jarvys the elder, throwing his square, burly figure into a heavy arm-chair one evening in the opening of June, while his grey eyes snapped triumphantly—"I've got that matter of Palmer's well under way."

Richard Jarvys sat in a small recess by the window. He laid down the paper which he was reading with a little exultant whistle:

"That's good," he said. "I hadn't heard anything about it for so long that I'd about concluded you thought the thing wouldn't pay and was going to let her slide."

Jarvys the elder snapped his fingers.

"Trust me for that. I don't let a bird stay in the bushes long when there's a chance of trapping it. But this confounded war has got everything out of shape, and I've had business on hand that's drove all other matters out of mind for a time; but now I've got them ships fitted out for privateerin', and hope good luck'll fetch me in some rich hauls, I've turned my attention to the Palmers."

"What have you done, anyhow?" asked the son and heir, crossing one limb over the other with an appearance of deep interest.

"I've put the whole thing in lawyer Wyman's hands—capital fellow, that Wyman. If there's a hitch in a bill of sale, or a will, or a title-deed, he's sure to sniff it out; and he's sent a doc'ment to the Deacon that'll give him some—

thin' beside his Bible to chaw on ;" and the man rubbed his hands with evident satisfaction at this abortive attempt at a joke.

The June winds, with their sweet breath of spices, came in softly at the open window, for the roses burned like great clusters of carbuncles on the bush by the front door, and mingled with their breath the faint seasoning of the sea-breeze, for the tide was coming in. The sunset, too, lay upon the carpet in great furrows of golden light. Suddenly, in the midst of this conversation betwixt father and son, there came a soft, light tap at the door.

"Come in!" The gruff tones of Mr. Jarvys raised themselves slightly in answer to the timid summons, which he fancied came from the hand of a little child.

Great was the surprise of the old man and the young when the door opened and revealed Grace Palmer, the small buds opening and failing in her cheeks; and yet a steady purpose sat in the dark blue eyes and controlled the sweet, unbent mouth.

"Walk in, Miss Palmer," said the elder man, rising, while the younger one sank back further in the recess, his whole face crimsoned with surprise and—several other feelings of which he was not distinctly conscious.

"I am glad to find you alone, Mr. Jarvys," chimed the silvery voice which suited the face, and which yet had a timid tremor throbbing in and out of it; and Grace Palmer took her seat.

The man glanced towards the recess in the corner, but his son had shrunk further back and evidently did not wish to be discovered.

Mr. Jarvys certainly felt awkward under the gaze of those large, soft eyes; so he determined to put a bold face

on the matter, and he thrust his hands in his pockets and bowed.

"Can I serve you in any way, Miss Palmer?"

The blue, steady eyes were on his face, and Grace's courage was evidently gaining the ascendancy over her first embarrassment.

"I hope that you can and will; but I wish first to inform you, Mr. Jarvys, that I have sought this interview without the knowledge of a human being—that none of my family have the remotest suspicion of it."

"Exactly," interposed Mr. Jarvys, not knowing precisely what else to say.

"And it is for my father's sake I have come;" the silvery voice gaining poise and earnestness as it proceeded. "Mr. Jarvys, I thought that you might be induced to listen to his daughter; that you would not turn a deaf ear and a hard heart to what I have come to say to you."

Mr. Jarvys began now to forestall the purpose of the young lady's visit. A dogged expression of resistance began to steal over his face and supplant its slight self-conscious smirk.

"Certainly, Miss Palmer; I'm ready enough to hear all that you've got to say; only business is business, and it ain't quite so agreeable to do that with a young woman and a pretty one;" with a feeble attempt at flattery.

Grace was too intent on the object of her visit to notice or feel this. This time her words went direct to the point.

"Sir, you know that my father is an old man, and I have come here to beg you not to break his heart and my mother's—not to take away our home from us if the law puts the power into your hands."

"I'm sorry to hear that," answered the man, with a

smile which touched a little on a smirk and a little on a sneer, and yet attempted to be polite. "But business is business, you know."

"Oh, sir, do not say that!"

In her eagerness, she leaned her head forward, and the sweet, wistful face was brought full into the surreptitious gaze of Richard Jarvys. He saw the tears blurring the blue eyes, he heard the entreating voice.

"You will not break the hearts of my poor father and mother; you will not turn us all helpless into the street; you will not take away the house which shelters us, when you know in your heart that it honestly belongs to us!"

"I never know anything except what the law tells me, Miss Palmer," answered Mr. Jarvys, curtly, for these last words had stung the man, and his face settled down into a sullen determination which gave to Grace Palmer no ray of hope.

"Oh, sir, do not say that! Have pity upon us if we are in your power, and leave us our home. You have money enough to last you all the years of your life, and when you come to lie down on your death-bed it will not be any comfort to remember that you turned a poor old man and his helpless family out from the home which had sheltered them all of their lives."

The brave girl kept her voice steady, but the tears had overleaped the blue eyes now, and lay on the fair young cheeks beneath them. It seemed as if it could not be in the heart of man to resist that sweet, pleading face of Grace Palmer's, pleading for more than her life.

Perhaps for the moment, as he gazed, the heart of the man was touched; perhaps the angels who watched him at that hour saw that a feeling of relenting and regret stirred

his soul. His face almost seemed to relax, but it hardened the next moment; the old greed and the old avarice overcame it, and the moment of grace was passed for Jarvys the elder.

"Miss Palmer," he said, and his voice was harsher and harder than ever, "it is no use to talk to me after this fashion. When a thing's mine I'll have it spite of God, man, or the devil, if I can get hold of it; and there's an end on't. The old Palmer homestead belongs to me by law, and because your folks have held it wrongfully this three-score of years, it's no sign that I shouldn't have my rights at last; and I am not to be frightened out of gettin' them by any talk on religion; and I reckon my last day'll be able to take care of itself. At any rate, I ain't goin' to be cheated out of my rights now for any fears of that."

The ship-owner finished his speech with an angry flush mounting all over his face; for the words of Grace Palmer had stung him more than he would have liked to own, and he sat looking at her in a hard, defiant way, with a lurid flash in his grey eyes.

It was worth considerable to see Grace Palmer at that moment. She rose up and looked her host in the face with her calm, dauntless eyes. The last tinge of color had fled from her cheeks, but there was no tremor on the lips set in those new, stern lines, nor in the clear ring of the voice that answered steadfast as the eyes:

"Very well, Mr. Jarvys; I shall not urge you farther. The God whose name you have just defied be witness betwixt us this hour that I did not come for myself; that I came only to plead for the grey hairs of my father and mother, because I longed to see their last years go down in peace under their own roof. And remember, sir, I

have asked this of the man whose grandfather my own risked his life to save, and who said, when he sold him the land where our house now stands: 'You have paid for it a thousand times more than this gold;' and remember that at the day of reckoning, which is surely coming for you, there shall rise up in witness against you one man—your own grandfather!"

And she went out of the door carrying her fair white face steadily; and looking at the two then, one would never have thought that it was Grace Palmer who had been the suppliant, for the ship-owner cowed under the words of the girl; and the clear, incisive tones were like blows which struck home on his soul and staggered it for a moment. His face was white, and had a scared, cowed look as he turned it towards his son. Then he tried to shake off the whole thing with sneer and bravado. Mr. Jarvys put his hands in his pockets.

"Well, Dick, that girl was cut out either for a tragedy actress or a methodist preacher. By King George, she beats her father all hollow. She's handsome as a pictur', too! It was worth takin' a smart blessin' to look at them eyes and that face o' hern."

Richard Jarvys came out of the recess where he had hidden himself, his face pale and agitated.

"Father, I think you was quite too hard on her."

"Likely it seems so to you. When I was of your age my heart wasn't as tough as it is now, and I should have yielded at once to the pleadin' and the preachin'; but years do to a man what they do to an oak, Dick; they toughen him—they toughen him, I say."

"Well, father, there's such a thing as carrying the toughening process too far. I'd rather never have owned a rod

of the Palmer homestead, than had that girl go out of our house in that fashion."

Jarvys the elder glanced up furtively at his son. The young man's whole face held a variety of feelings which he could not well have expressed; but mortification, regret, agitation, each in turn replaced the other.

"Dick," said his father, while a flash of conviction crossed the keen eyes, "if you've taken a fancy to that girl that's just given your father such a blessing, now's your time to strike. I'll throw in the homestead for a marriage portion, and you'll get a pretty face and a sharp tongue to match it."

It was very doubtful whether the elder man was in earnest, for there was a sneer in his tones which somewhat qualified his promise; but Richard was too much under the influence of conflicting feelings to observe this. The sight of Grace Palmer's face kindled out of its usual grave sweetness, had roused the passion which had been smothered in wounded pride, and jealousy, and bitterness, for a season. A sudden impulse seized the young man to follow Grace and act upon his father's suggestion. He caught his hat and hurried out of the house, and the sweet, pale face went like a vision before the thoughts of Richard Jarvys.

"Grace!—Grace Palmer!"

She was turning into the lane which led up to her father's house when the voice of Richard Jarvys stole up to her. Grace turned quickly. The courage which had upheld her in the interview with the ship-owner was gone now, and a great revulsion of feeling had swept over her. The tears were flowing still down her cheeks. Richard saw them in the soft evening light; for the sun

had by this time gone beyond the hills, and a great lake of burnished gold lay in the west. The apple-blossoms fed the winds with their sweet myrrh, and the year was scattering the beauty, and joy, and praise of June on every object.

Grace tried to shield her tear-stained face after the first start of surprise.

"Grace," exclaimed Richard, panting up to her, "I heard all that you said to my father just now."

"You did?—well?"

She said it softly and without much surprise, for the intense emotion of the last hour had left her in a state of nervous prostration.

"Yes, and I was sorry for you, Grace. I wish that I could help you."

She looked up at him, and the unbent lines of the lips told of sharp struggle and suffering. They fashioned a weak, sorrowful smile. "Thank you, Richard. I hoped I could do something for my poor father, but I couldn't."

Richard was certainly touched, and he looked on that pale face with the old greedy longing to possess it; and then a triumphant thought shot across him that this hour of sore trial was just the one to best promote his wishes, and in his selfish heart the man was glad that that old title-deed of the Palmer homestead had come to light.

"Grace," said Richard Jarvys, coming to the point and feeling in his eagerness tolerably secure of his ground, little suspecting the true quality of the woman with whom he had to do; "Grace, there is but one way in which I can serve you, and I'm ready to do it if you'll only give me the liberty."

The blue eyes were turned full of intense eagerness to-

wards him. "How can *you* serve me—what can *I* do, Richard?"

"Only give me the right to say the Palmer homestead shall belong to you and yours for ever. Oh, Grace," he went on rapid and eager, "only say that you will give me the right to protect you, and there is nothing I will not do for your happiness. Your father and mother shall live and die in their old homestead; everything shall be adjusted; and for you, Grace Palmer, you shall have, as I told you once before, the truest heart, the tenderest love that man ever gave to woman."

The roses had blown wide in the cheeks of Grace Palmer while Richard was talking. Then they died out suddenly, and when he ceased she answered with a sweet, settled gravity, which was absolute to any one who understood:

"It is useless to ask me to do this, for I could only give the answer that I did before; and you would not want my hand or my heart if it was bought in this way."

"Yes, I would want it so, Grace," eagerly answered Richard, "and in time I have faith that you would learn to love me."

The bloom touched her forehead; but Grace felt that she owed Richard's generosity the confession; and, after a brief struggle, the poor girl stammered out:

"Richard, it is impossible for me to think of this one moment. There are reasons which render it so. I have given my promise to another."

Grace's timid glance grazed Richard's face as she made this avowal; and she caught the expression made up of anger, mortification, and jealousy which darkened it. He was silent a moment, struggling to regain the mastery

over himself and his voice. Then he commenced vehemently :

"It's easy enough to recall a promise, Grace, under some circumstances; and your situation certainly exonerates you from fulfilling yours. Remember, it is only as you belong to me that I can serve you; and I plead not for myself alone, but for the sake of your father and mother."

A look of ineffable disgust went over the face of the listening girl. One moment it was dyed with crimson, and then grew white as the spray which fluted the sands, for the tide was now coming in.

She turned upon the son, as a half hour before she had turned upon the father, those large, dauntless eyes, and it was no wonder that the face of Richard Jarvys quailed beneath the silvery scorn of her tones when they came.

"Richard Jarvys, do you suppose my father and mother would not sooner lay me in the grave by their other children than have me commit such a sin; do you suppose they would shelter their old age under a roof bought at such a price? And shame upon you, that you would take advantage of my necessity and affections to urge me to the commission of such a deed! No, Richard Jarvys, you and your father may do the worst that is in your hearts to do; you may succeed in driving us from the home which you know is rightfully ours, but you can never drive the heart of Grace Palmer to perjure itself; and oh! are you fallen so low, that you could have a woman who was base enough to be bought in such a way!"

The calm, resolute eyes did not shrink or falter. They stood looking with reproachful scorn on Richard's face

after the lips had ceased speaking. An angry flush rose slowly over his cheeks, until they touched the roots of his hair; he felt that the Deacon's daughter had baffled him again; and for the last time his whole expression darkened into sullen rage, and his eyes flashed fiercely, when at last he raised them to Grace.

"You have scorned my love twice, Grace Palmer," and the girl could not recognise the changed tones; "and you will never have a chance to do it again. I would have been your friend; but the woman who makes an enemy of Richard Jarvys sooner or later has reason to repent it!" And with this dastardly threat the baffled, disappointed man went on his way to brood over schemes of revenge on the Palmer family.

A gnarled old apple-tree grew close to the foot-path in the lane, and the black, knotted branches were now thickly covered with blossoms like clusters of pearls. Grace Palmer sat down under the tree, and all the unnatural strength which had sustained her in the last hour gave way in one long, slow sigh, followed by a great sob. Then the storm went over her. The future looked dark and desolate enough to the young girl, sitting under that lonely apple-tree.

She felt keenly—the delicate, high-spirited woman—the insults to which the coarseness of the elder Jarvys had subjected her; and the threats with which the younger had left her had not been calculated to compose her. There was no earthly help, look wherever she would. Robert was too young to render any practical advice or sympathy in this emergency. Edward Dudley, suspecting nothing of all this, was on the battle-field, and every moment of her life was burdened with trembling anxiety for him.

"O God! what shall I do? Have pity upon me!" murmured the young girl, as she sat on a low stone under the apple-tree full of blossoms, where the birds would sing sweetly the next dawn.

And with that prayer there came a slow calm over the storm in the soul of Grace Palmer; and if there trembled for a moment over her heart the shadow which fell upon the royal poet's, when the cry was wrung from him, "Lord, how long shall the wicked—how long shall the wicked triumph?" the question and the shadow were both swept away in the great river of light which poured over her soul as she remembered with David: "But the Lord is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge."

Grace Palmer laid down at the feet of these words all doubts and all fears. Her soul rose up to strength and calm as she thought of the Love which would not leave nor forsake her, whose yearning tenderness was greater than her mother's when she sang over her cradle the lullabies of her first-born, and which was wiser than all earthly wisdom and strength.

She sat very still, and the great white chalice of apple blossoms waved its sweet spices about her; the soft lights and brown shadows of the June evening were sparkling and shifting over the young leaves and buds; the deep blue above, the tender green below, all the beauty and fragrance of the summer night were living witnesses of her Father's love and care.

A sweet, solemn light shone over all the young face; a sweet, child-like smile sat now in the midst of it; and when Grace Palmer rose up and went slowly on her way home, she was strong in the courage and faith which God gives to those who love Him.

The days wore into the summer heats, and nothing happened to ruffle the still current of outward life at the farmhouse. Deacon Palmer had not yet availed himself of any legal counsel in the matter which lay so heavy on his heart. The court did not hold its next session until late in the ensuing autumn, and the Deacon still entertained a hope that the bill of sale, of whose existence he entertained no shadow of doubt, might still be discovered, although old Mrs. Palmer's strict search seemed to have exhausted every spot where there was the remotest possibility of concealment.

Grace Palmer's greatest pleasure at this season was in her letters, which the stage brought regularly twice a week. Blessed draughts to the heart of the Deacon's daughter were those letters, with their strong courage, their calm faith, and the tenderness which wound its golden thread through every line, and suffused the whole letter as the sunlight did the summer. Grace leaned her heart up against them next to her God.

It was evident the writer found time, in the midst of his new military life, to think of all which concerned her; to interest himself in her daily studies, her work, her needs, and feelings. Pictures of camp-life the letters held, set in such warm, vivid colors, that, sitting in the quiet of her own room, Grace seemed to be mingling in the stir and din of the camp at Cambridge, sitting under the shadows of the low tents sprinkled over the grass, or springing up to the call of the drum in the summer dawn.

The writer always wrote brave and calm; not as one who puts the truth out of sight as too painful to think of, but as one who had realized and sounded it, and then left it with God, certain that there, and there only, it must

be well! Stray flashes of humor, a keen appreciation of all that was quaint and novel in his present life and the men with whom he was brought into such close contact, always stirred the round, full laugh of Grace Palmer, which it was a joyful thing to hear, with its little merry interludes and quick catchings of her breath, for her life was young; and though the man she loved better than life had gone to offer his for his country, and though it was very doubtful whether the roof over her head would shelter her for another summer, still youth and health would assert themselves; she could not be always grave.

At last there was a hiatus in Grace's letters, and then came the tidings of the battle of Bunker Hill, rousing the whole country to new hope and courage, and above all, to mightier work and sacrifice.

The next mail brought Grace a letter—the bold, broad hand on the envelope telling that the writer thereof was not numbered with the dead.

Two weeks later, Edward Dudley's letter read.

“Yesterday, Grace, the new Commander-in-Chief appointed by Congress entered Cambridge, escorted thither by a committee of the Congress of Massachusetts. What an hour was that in which he rode into camp! Every eye of the vast multitude assembled to witness his entrée was turned, breathless, towards him; then what wild acclamations rent the air as he rode in, the head of the army, the hope of his country, the stately and fair-haired Virginian, George Washington! I had a fine stand-point, and a good view of him; oh, Grace! dearly beloved, I liked this man's face; I searched it eagerly. It is a calm, strong, good one; the face of a man whom I could follow to the death in love and faith; the face of a man who will, under all circum-

stances, be true to himself, and of course this involves being true to all else besides. I fancied—no, I *felt* somewhat of all which was going on in his soul, as the calm grey eyes moved over the motley assemblage of troops of which he has been appointed leader. There was a look of sublime self-sacrifice on the noble face which lifted it into inspiration. It was the look of a man who had given up all for his country, whom no motives of ambition could sway, no love of power could move; who had accepted the great honor conferred on him as a trust direct from God. And looking on that calm, grand face, it seemed to me that this man had been consecrated, appointed of God, like Joshua of old, to lead our armies on to victory; for of the final result of this war I never have had a doubt. I do not disguise from myself the fearful odds against us. I know that my country is still in the early dawn of that long day of honor and praise which I see before her. I know that her troops, made up of raw militia, are to meet an army before whose pride and whose strength all the nations of the world have trembled; but I know, too, that we have on our side ‘Him who giveth the victory.’

“I do not disguise from myself—I will not from you, oh dear heart!—that it must be a long battle and a bloody one. The strongest and the bravest must be brought low; but, Grace, there is joy and glory in the death one dies for his native land; and oh, when I look out from the night of her present to the morning of her future, my heart stands still for its rush and swell of joy. Dear land of America! When she shall strike off the awful yoke of her oppressors, and stand up in her young strength, and each one of her Colonies united together shall lay the foundations of her broad, deep nationality, and she shall

take her fair place among the nations of the earth; her Constitution founded in justice and righteousness, her shores a refuge for the oppressed and the needy, herself a light to those who sit in darkness, the joy and praise of the earth;—when I look off and see her future in visions like these, my heart stands still and blesses God that for her it is to live and die—my country!

“Do not let those blue eyes of yours grow into shadow reading that last word. Oh, Grace, sweeter than the lilies, fairer than the sunrise of the summer morning, sing sweet at your spinning-wheel! Smile with the joy of happy and trusting thoughts over your churn or your books.

“Be sure that I am always with you; that I carry you so close and so precious, that no smoke of the battle-field, nor sound of war-trumpet, nor thunder of cannon, can for one moment blur my vision or drown my thoughts of you.

“Great is my joy! Such a country to live or to die for; such a *man* as this George Washington to lead me to battle; and oh, such a woman as Grace Palmer—mine, my own ‘for life or for death!’ Rejoice in my joy, oh little heart which I feel throbbing against my own; there is nothing to which to compare you in flower or jewel. In all things that are most precious and beautiful, in the solemn words of our betrothal, am I yours *for* life or for death.

“EDWARD DUDLEY.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE day after Grace had read this letter, and while the fragrance of its tenderness lingered around her heart, her mother had company. Two neighbors happened in to pass the afternoon, and a greater antithesis could hardly be conceived than that which the persons of Mrs. Peter Street and Mrs. Thankful Strong presented.

Mrs. Street was small, dark, angular, wiry, with a little pair of keen black eyes, which snapped and sparkled, and had a habit of diving and piercing into everything as though they would pluck some evil out of every object they lighted on. She had a small, wintry pair of lips, with a smile which came and went habitually as though it was intended to qualify the snapping of the eyes, but didn't succeed. Mrs. Peter Street was one of that large class of people who take a benevolent interest in their neighbors' concerns, who are well posted respecting all the social and domestic relations of those with whom they are brought in contact, especially if there be anything wrong or unfortunate in these relations; and she had a peculiar faculty, developed by long experience, of hunting out and holding up to view the worst possible side of character, conduct, and motive; indeed, her imagination was never at a loss to supply the latter, which was certain to be the worst possible.

Mrs. Thankful Strong was of a different type, physically and morally, at least; mentally, there was little to choose

between the two. She was tall, thin, with large bones, light skin, light hair, and light eyes, lymphatic and lackadaisical; there was a certain harmony of physique and expression about her; and all the forces of her life were what some author calls "centripetal;" for her whole being revolved in a very small orbit of selfishness.

She never could take a broad, generous view of any subject; she never could see any matter—social, political, religious—except in its relations to her own comfort or welfare, and her absolute unsuspiciousness of being swayed by any such motives was really refreshing; she would have been amazed and indignant at their suggestion. Mrs. Thankful Strong was of a timid, anxious, depressed temperament. But the two ladies shall sit for their own portraits, and you, reader, may recognise the pictures if you can. They are not uncommon or remarkable!

Both ladies had brought their knitting. Both took out their knitting sheaths, after receiving a cordial reception from Mrs. Palmer, which reception would have been somewhat qualified if she had overheard the conversation which took place a few rods from the house where the two ladies happened to overtake each other.

Mrs. Street and Mrs. Strong pinned their green and red knitting sheaths simultaneously to their waists, and after a brief excursion of her eyes about the room, which seemed to dive into every corner and let nothing escape them, Mrs. Street, who was the more loquacious of the two ladies, commenced:

"I told Ebenezer I wouldn't let another sun set without comin' over and seein', in a neighborly way, how matters stood with you and the Deacon. We've jist heard about the trouble you've got into."

"Yes," interpolated Mrs. Strong, whose voice always had a little despondent, disheartened tone, as though she regarded herself as the most wronged and afflicted of mortals, "Abijah says it's a burnin' shame in that ere Jarvys. To think of you and the Deacon's bein' turned out of house and home jist now, as you're droppin' into your old age!"

Mrs. Palmer moved uneasily at this condolence of her neighbors. She was ripping a coat of Robert's, which she intended transforming into one for Benjamin, and her shears dropped with a sharp sound on the kitchen floor at this crisis; but all necessity for a reply was superseded by Grace's sudden entrance.

She came in, in her quiet, graceful way, with a bit of ruffling in her hand. There was a light and peace on the sweet face which flowed from deep springs in her soul that neither of the guests could fathom. Both surveyed her intently as she shook hands with them in a quiet, neighborly sort of fashion, and then took her seat.

Somehow the bright face resting in a light which flowed from some inward spring was not to the taste of Mrs. Street. Then the quiet grace of the girl's words and manner excited that petty feeling of envy and antagonism which ignorance and malice are apt to feel for real superiority of mind and character.

"I'll take her pride down a bit," mentally resolved Mrs. Street; but this did not prevent her making very cordial and minute inquiries after Grace's health, which were answered in a frank, ladylike fashion, although it was apparent that Grace's heart was not in her words.

Mrs. Street returned to the subject which had been interrupted as soon as she thought the way sufficiently opened.

"I'm glad, Grace, to see you ain't any more down in the mouth with this trouble that's come on you all. I declare I couldn't sleep a wink the night I heard of it. To think of Deacon Palmer—such a good, prayin' man as he is—bein' turned out of the house and home that's been his'n and his father's afore him for nigh upon seventy year, and a young family on his hands."

"That's jist what I said to Abijah," sighed the dolorous tones of Mrs. Strong; and the blue and white yarn flowed in a variegated stream over her fingers.

There was a little silence. Mrs. Palmer nervously tore down a seam which required the strength of both hands to disjoin; but she did not speak a word. Grace bent over her ruffling, with quick flushes deepening and rising on her cheeks until they touched her forehead. The lips sat for a moment in a bent, disturbed line; then she looked up—her soft, steady eyes bent full on her guests.

"We are grateful to you both," said the steadfast voice, which did not break nor ripple from beginning to close, "for any sympathy you may feel for us in our troubles. But it is one of which we prefer not to speak at present; and you will therefore excuse both mother and me if we ask you not to pursue the subject."

Mrs. Street was, as she afterwards expressed herself, "thoroughly taken back." She looked at Grace, who answered her with a bright, clear, steady look, and, in mingled confusion and surprise, managed to stammer out:

"I didn't 'spose you'd feel bad at old friends expressing their sorrow for your trouble."

"We appreciate all true sympathy, Mrs. Street; only just now we want it given as we must receive it—silently."

There was, of course, no more to be said after this. Mrs. Street devoted herself assiduously to her knitting for a few moments, as did her neighbor, whose perceptions were in a somewhat nascent condition; and when the dark little woman opened again, it was on a topic she took care should be very remote from her last one.

She launched out into her neighbors' affairs, personal and private, with a relish which the keen snap of the black eyes bore witness to; and her tongue and her knitting-needles seemed each to add fresh impetus to the other. There was no painful fact in the past history of those who came within the range of her remarks that Mrs. Street did not drag out and hold up in its worst light; her speech slurred over every character that she touched; wheresoever there were especial motives for silence and charity, there did the evil imagination of Mrs. Street delight to flower; where there was any room for doubt respecting the motives which induced any line of action, she was sure to supply the wrong one; and her speech was interpolated by nods and mysterious shakes of her head calculated to give it force and emphasis in the eyes of her listeners, although she took care to interfuse her gossip with various sanctimonious expressions of regret and dismay at the evil of mankind in general, and of the subject of her discourse in particular.

Tick, tick, had gone an hour; click, click, had gone Mrs. Street's needles; clack, clack, had gone her tongue, when at last she paused with a dim consciousness that she had had the ground mostly to herself. Grace and her mother had each seemed intent on her work, though any keen observer might have read various signs of displeasure in the face of the former. The flushes went and came

rapidly in her face; sometimes the look of indignation alternated with one of amusement, or she flashed up a glance of curiosity at the speaker; but she was very quiet, and Mrs. Strong only intruded an occasional "Dear me, I can't believe my own ears! What is the world a comin' to?" in the most lugubrious of tones.

"Of course, I don't *know* as it's true," Mrs. Street resumed again, somewhat qualifying in her tones. She had been indulging in various uncharitable surmises respecting a friend of Mrs. Palmer's and herself, which surmises she had endeavored to fortify with proofs that would have shrivelled to nothing before the slightest investigation of candor and good sense.

"I don't believe that there *is* a word of truth in the whole matter, Mrs. Street," said Grace, to whom the last remark had been addressed; and she quietly turned down the corner of her ruffle. "It's always so much pleasanter to believe good than evil of people, and in this case it's safer."

This reasoning did not quite gratify Mrs. Street.

"But where there's so much smoke, there's sure to be some fire. Still, as you say, I al'ays like to think the best thing of my neighbors that I can;" with a dim feeling that she might have gone too far.

Grace's clear eyes were raised once more to her guests; the peach-bloom sat still in her cheeks.

"I think, Mrs. Street," said the steadfast voice, answering the steadfast eyes, "that it is our duty not only to think, but to speak well of them; to hide any wrong which they may have done as we would hide our own, and never speak of their failings if we can avoid it, and see always only what is pleasant and good in them. I think, also, that is what

Christ meant, among other things, when He said: 'Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you.'

The silvery voice stopped. Mrs. Street's face showed that the rebuke had struck home; and she was not a woman of very acute sensibilities. For once she was at a loss what to say, and when she spoke again her words did not touch the last subject.

"Grace, may I ask how long it was since you jined the church?"

"About two years, Mrs. Street." The face and tones bright and quiet.

"Wall, I must say, Grace," with a triumphant sparkle of her eyes, feeling that now she was going to annihilate the girl, "you're well fit now to go right into any minister's family."

Grace looked up with the smallest possible smile, unbending the red line of her lip; she was perfectly clear and calm. There was not the faintest shade of embarrassment about her.

"I hope that I shall be, Mrs. Street, if I am ever fortunate enough, as you say, to enter one."

Mrs. Street was effectually silenced.

Mrs. Strong now found that her turn had come.

"Isn't it a dreadful thing to think on, *Miss Palmer*, this horrid war that we've got into? I don't know what's to become on us all. There's Abijah's completely thrown out of business."

"I know it falls very heavy on us all," answered the Deacon's wife; "but you know, *Miss Strong*, it's a war undertaken for our rights and liberties; and we must bear the burden as we can, and leave the rest to God."

"But then there's my husband's business, *Miss Palmer*;

if it hadn't been for this war, he'd a made a very comfortable year on't; and now I don't see what's to become of us and the children."

"I sympathize with you, *Miss Strong*," answered her hostess; "but don't it comfort you to think that you're sufferin' in a good cause, and that this war is a righteous war—for you know all that we hold dear or precious is at stake?"

"I can't find any comfort in that," answered Mrs. Strong, in the same tone of doleful obstinacy; "I'm sure I'd rather that the Britishers had had all that they wanted, than that my husband's business should have been ruined."

"But, Mrs. Strong, would you rather your country should have been ruined, your children have been slaves, than suffered the evils which this war will bring upon us?" inquired Grace, earnestly, as she rolled up her band of muslin, for the afternoon was growing low.

"We got along well enough afore the war; and I'm sure it couldn't be much worse for us to have the country go to ruin and the children slaves than to have Abijah's business broken up. Just think of that!"

Mrs. Strong did not fathom the thought which flashed through Grace's mind at that moment. She saw the large, intent look bent on her with a peculiar expression, and the lips open; but on second thought—a thought which certainly involved no compliment to Mrs. Strong—Grace closed them and set about getting tea, while Mrs. Street, who had remained quiet for an unprecedented length of time, went deep into the mysteries of a new recipe for dyeing blue, which she had obtained from Mrs. Palmer.

The supper passed off pleasantly enough, as suppers usually did at Deacon Palmer's. Even Mrs. Street's eyes

seemed to soften somewhat as she praised the light, snowy biscuit, and the blackberry-jelly which "relished" with it so nicely, and the raised cake, in which she averred Mrs. Palmer "always had the luck." But though she seemed unusually quiet, Mrs. Street was gathering up her forces for a last attack on Grace; for it *did* require some courage to meet those steadfast, intent eyes, which Mrs. Street felt looked beyond her face at something she did not feel quite assured about. With the last cup of tea, however, her courage rose, and with a little spiteful twinkle of her black eyes, she turned on Grace, saying:

"I've heard a story about you, Grace, from a thousand different quarters, which I've denied to every one, co's I didn't believe a word on't; it ain't like you."

"Isn't it?" asked the girl, quietly breaking off a corner of her cake. "Then it probably isn't true."

"No; but folks will have it that you're engaged to Parson Willetts's nephew, for all you ain't seen him more than half-a-dozen times, and that you wrote him letters regularly, all last winter, though you'd hardly had time to scrape acquaintance with him. I only mention this to let you know how folks talk, for I know you're too right-minded a girl to do such things; only, I'd like to be able to say that I had your word for't that there wasn't a letter of it true."

The rose-buds had hardly deepened in Grace's cheek; the face was not turned from its bright quiet.

"You can give people a better answer than that, if you desire to oblige me, Mrs. Street," she said, with sweet gravity.

"Can I now? Wall, I shall be glad to serve you, Grace, if you'll only tell me how," the black eyes snapping sharply.

"Will you please to tell anybody who asks you about my affairs that, as they are none of your business, you have not meddled with them, and are consequently unable to give them any information."

Soon after tea, Mrs. Palmer's guests found that imperative duties summoned them home. Something of their feelings may be surmised from a brief conversation which they had together soon after they had left the front gate.

"I haven't enjoyed myself particularly," said Mrs. Street in a confidential tone to her neighbor. "That ere Grace is a dreadful uppish thing—dreadful! I al'ays said her mother'd spile her."

"And to think," added Mrs. Strong, in a very much injured tone, "she wanted me to say that this war was all right, when it's ruined Abijah's business; and he isn't very forehanded either."

"Grace," said Mrs. Palmer, as she assisted her daughter in gathering up the tea-dishes, "I *was* beat at the way you answered *Miss* Street, this afternoon."

"What did you think of it on the whole, mother?" asked Grace, with a dainty smile just showing itself around the corners of her lips.

"Wall, it was cool, child; but I must say it was to the pint."

CHAPTER VIII.

"YOU look tired, father?"

"Well, I feel sort o' tuckered out, child," said Deacon Palmer, as he flung himself into the great chair his daughter placed for him, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead with his coarse handkerchief. "My bones are gettin' too old for the brunt of harvest work. I should have laughed once at what wilts me up in an hour or two now. Your father's gettin' to be an old man, Grace."

"Well, all things have to grow old to get ripe," answered Grace, looking up from the stratum of golden butter, whose angles she was rounding with her knife, to the sun-browned face, with a bright smile which was touched with some deeper feeling. "Are you getting on well, father?"

"Fust rate; if this weather holds on we shall go through with the brunt of the work this week; and the Lord never blessed a summer with finer crops than He has this one o' seventeen hundred and seventy-five."

"Well, good crops and the battle of Bunker Hill are something to thank Him for," returning from the pantry with a pitcher of milk in one hand, and an apple-pie with daintily ruffled edges in the other. "Come, father, sit up to the table now and take your rest and your lunch together. Here's something you'll like, too; it's a green apple-pie. I made it on purpose for your lunch; it's the first

we've had this season, you know;" and she slipped her knife through the green lake of sweetened fruit.

"Where's your mother, Grace?" asked the farmer, as he seated himself at the table.

"She's gone over to the tavern to pass the day. I just prevailed upon her to start off. It always does her good to see Mrs. Trueman, and she needs to be kept up all she can. I've sent for Lucy to come and pass the day with me;" setting herself down before a yellow bowl heaped with ripe currants, the long stems like green threads strung with pendants of coral, and it was evident that Grace's artistic sense was pleased with their beauty by the dainty way in which her small fingers touched the glowing fruit.

It was in the dead heats of the harvest now. The windows were all open; the summer winds had gone to sleep, for it was eleven o'clock of the July day, and the ripe sunlight was only feebly contested in its way to the kitchen by the rose-brier which tapestried the windows.

"It's a wiltin' day out in the fields," said the Deacon, as he helped himself to a third slice of the pie.

"Yes, we can hardly keep comfortable in the house. How does that pie relish, father?"

"It touches the spot. You beat your mother, Grace, at apple-pies; and that's the highest compliment that I know how to pay you. Somebody else 'll appreciate them as much as I do one of these days."

Grace looked up in bright, swift recognition of her father's meaning; then some other thought touched her smile, for it faded into a sudden gravity that was mixed with pain. She bent her head lower over the currants.

Perhaps her father saw the sudden gravity which put

out the smile, and comprehended its meaning. At any rate, he finished his meal in silence, which seemed to express a sympathy which he could not put in words. Then he pushed his chair away, and watched the girl, as she skilfully slipped the red globes from their stems; and there were many feelings at work in the soul of Deacon Palmer. One of these, at last, found expression in a way very unusual with the farmer. He stretched his great hand towards the pretty picture seated there in the golden framing of July sunshine, and stroked the smooth brown hair tenderly as though it had been a baby's.

"My little daughter," said the farmer, in a soft, caressing tone.

Grace turned quickly, and looked up at her father with a mingling of brightness and softness in her eyes. She leaned her cheek down on his knee in mute acknowledgment of all which his words covered. The farmer stroked the soft peach-bloom a moment, and this time the words as well as the tone touched closer to his feelings.

"My *poor* little daughter."

Grace looked up now. There was a little struggle in her face; but the brightness vanquished the pain, and her voice endorsed her words, for it came bright and cheerful—

"No, father; I'm not poor. I'm rich—very rich."

He understood her.

"So you are, my child—with all the best riches of heaven or earth. You know what Paul says: 'All things are yours.'"

"I know. Those things Paul meant are mine, father." Her face shone now as she lifted it to him with peace and joy, which were fed with springs beyond this world.

It told its own story of love, and faith, and submission.

The Deacon's heart swelled in a fervent thanksgiving. It was a silent one, however, and when the words came, they were only :

"Daughter, you have been a great comfort to us this summer."

She thanked him with her eyes, her cheek still leaning against his knee; and there was a brief silence. Grace spoke first, with a little doubt and hesitancy, for she had put away many feelings too solemn and tender for words to reach now.

"Father, I've been wondering a good deal of late——" She stopped here.

"About what, Grace?"

"Why, that you didn't consult some lawyer, or do something about this matter; I'm afraid that man will get the start of you."

"I've considered it a good deal myself, of late," answered the Deacon, with a reflective voice and face; "but I've had a kind of feeling that something would happen, or somebody come along to help me, sent of the Lord. Not that I meant to neglect the means, child, but the feelin's been so strong it's sort o' held me back."

"When will it come before the court?"

"The next session opens in November. I shan't put the matter off any longer. I mean to place it in Lawyer Fuller's hands this week."

At that moment there was a very peremptory summons of the old brass knocker. Grace sprang up, gave her hair a little impromptu smoothing, and hurried to the door. She encountered there a face which she did not remember

to have ever seen before ; it was that of a man evidently a little past his thirties ; a face with agreeable outlines and a manly, straightforward, intelligent expression, which at once put you in a pleasant humor with it. The eyes had a shrewd, penetrating look, which indicated they were accustomed to study whatever came in their way ; and yet it was a kindly sort of study—nothing sharp or cynical about it.

“ Good morning, ma’am,” said the stranger, lifting his hat, and the manner and the voice were their own witness of the speaker’s cultivation, both mental and social. “ Is Deacon Palmer at home ? ”

The voice had reached the Deacon in the kitchen, for the doors were all open, and the guest had hardly reached the sitting-room before the host did.

“ Don’t you know me, sir ? ” and the stranger pressed forward eagerly and seized the Deacon’s hand.

“ I can’t say I do, my friend,” searching his guest’s face curiously.

“ Well, if you’ve forgotten my face, you haven’t forgotten the name of John Deming.”

“ John Deming ! ” cried the Deacon, with a start ; “ I reckon not. But it ain’t possible ! ” and he surveyed the stranger with a mixture of doubt and belief.

“ Yes, it is possible, Deacon Palmer ; I am John Deming, and no other.”

Grace had not seen her father look so glad for many a day. He shook the stranger’s hand until she was certain it must have ached up to his shoulder ; he commented and complimented him on his looks ; he asked him a dozen questions at once, and with his habitual hospitality, hurried Grace off to the kitchen to prepare a collation for the

stranger, though the latter interposed a strong objection to this, which the Deacon overruled.

"I'm sorry *Miss* Palmer happens to be out, John; it'll do her eyes good to see you. We was talkin' about you only the other day."

"It's good to find one hasn't been forgotten after years of absence and silence. Ah, Deacon, you've got the old voice and the old smile; but I must tell you the truth, time hasn't gone lightly over you."

"That's a fact," answered the Deacon, a little sadly; "we've got to stand aside, as I tell mother, and see the younger ones take our places; but when the fruit gets into autumn it's time for it to fall, you know."

"That's all right enough for fruit, but I hope *your* time for falling is a long way off yet, Deacon Palmer."

"Thank you, John; we must leave that to the Lord, you know. How have the years gone with you? It's fourteen on 'em since you went out of the front door there."

"I know it, Deacon; and putting that morning and this together, I couldn't make it seem that there lay more than a week betwixt them as I came up to the front door and everything wore just the old look. It was like the welcome of an old friend," and the speaker glanced with a kind of tender recognition about the room.

"Well, what has the world done to you, John, in these years that have changed you from a boy to a man?" There was more than curiosity in the question; an interest almost fatherly was in the Deacon's eyes as he still kept them on the young man.

"It's treated me pretty well on the whole. You know I went to South America and stayed there until my uncle died. It was his wish that I should take his place in the

firm, and he put me in the counting-room at once, and tried to make a merchant of me."

"And didn't succeed—eh, John?"

"He might if he had lived, for he was so fond of me that it would have gone hard not to oblige him; but he died suddenly, and left his affairs in great confusion. Two of his partners were Spaniards—one of them was a scoundrel. I should never have got a dollar of my uncle's fortune, though it was mine by his will and my being nearest of kin, if I had not been on the spot. As it was, I saved only a few thousands with the aid of two shrewd lawyers; but looking into his affairs at that time gave me a taste for my profession."

"Your profession, John—what's that?"

"I sailed from South America to England, and studied law in London."

"No!" looking at his guest in amazement, which, for the moment, did not allow of more words.

"I thought you knew all this from the letter to which you never replied."

"Because I never received it. It don't seem possible, John," in a musing tone, looking at his guest.

"No wonder you say that, Deacon, remembering the little ragged, friendless savage that came to your door eighteen years ago. Oh, my friend, all that I am—all that I ever shall be, I owe to you and Mrs. Palmer." The speaker broke off abruptly—his eyes were moist—he leaned over and shook the hard hand of the Deacon.

"Mother al'ays said it was in you, John; from the first she declared you was bound to make your mark in the world!"

"Bless her good heart. You've got a handsome daugh-

ter there, Deacon, with the look of her mother in her eyes."

"Yes, sir. Grace is her mother's child. Don't you remember how you used to trot her on your knee?"

"*Don't I!* The old place is full of pictures and memories that my heart has carried all over the world."

A shadow fell upon the old man's face, which had been full of animation, for the last remark of his guest touched the great fear which haunted all the Deacon's sleeping and waking hours.

He shook his head mournfully. "Ah, John, there's little comfort to me in goin' round the old place now, though every foot of the soil's as dear to me as my right hand. I'm like to lose it."

"Like to lose the old place?" repeated Mr. Deming, in a voice taken full possession of by amazement.

"Yes, John. It's been a terrible blow to my old age. You remember Ralph Jarvys, the ship-owner?"

"Perfectly; his son Richard and I were schoolmates, you know, and had a sharp pull together for the prizes."

"Well, he's come across an old title-deed of the land which belonged to his grandfather, and as the bill of sale can't be produced, nor the record either, it's goin' to give me great trouble."

"What counsel have you employed?"

"Nobody yet. I've put the thing off, hopin' for some farther light, but it won't do to wait any longer."

"Deacon Palmer, perhaps here's a chance for me to repay somewhat of the great debt I owe you. I've practised at the bar three years in Philadelphia, with better success than I dared to hope; but my health broke down under it, and I found I must have a vacation. So I concluded to

set off for the sea shore and see you at the same time. Now, if you'll put this thing into my hands, I'll promise to manage it for you as well as anybody you will be likely to find."

Strong emotion kept the farmer from speaking for a few moments. Then he looked up.

"John," he said, simply, "it must have been you that I have been waiting for all this time, and I didn't know it. The Lord bless and reward you for what you have said."

Just then Grace entered and invited Mr. Deming out to dinner, and the conversation was terminated by his agreeing to come round that evening, when the farmer would put him in possession of all the facts relating to the sale of the Palmer lands.

And once seated at the table, and after a brief chat betwixt the young lawyer and his hostess, who did the honors so gracefully, the conversation turned on a topic which at that time lay closest to the heart of every true man and woman throughout the land.

"You've got a governor of the true metal, Deacon, here in Connecticut, which is more than can be said of all the other Colonies!"

"Yes, sir. Governor Trumbull, honor to his name! was ahead of all the others, and answered his country's call nobly. It'll be remembered of him long after his grey head has laid under the grass."

"I hope so. As for our army 'round Boston, I expect that every mail will bring us tidings of bloody work there. It don't seem as though his Majesty's troops would remain much longer shut up in such a plight; but the warm reception which they met at Bunker's Hill has made them a lit-

tle careful about venturing out. I tell you, sir, that was a glorious thing for America!"

"Yes, sir—yes, sir," responded the Deacon, with a surreptitious glance at the face of his daughter.

"It seems to me little less than a miracle," continued the young lawyer, pausing in the midst of dismembering the leg of a chicken, "that they haven't sallied out and attacked our lines during the last fortnight. What a glorious chance they had for it before that powder from the Jerseys came to hand. If General Gage had only known his advantage, he might have sallied out and put the whole army to rout; for what could the bravest men do with no powder to fall back upon except what was in their cartridge-boxes!"

"God must have blinded the hearts of our enemies as he did the Philistines in the days of old," subjoined the Deacon.

"I believe so, and that he must have raised us up a deliverer for our oppressed nation in this George Washington," added the lawyer.

"Congress and the country seem to have great confidence in him," continued the Deacon. "For my own part, I must say all his measures seem to show, so far, a remarkable degree of sagacity and prudence. But it requires all these to be at the helm now, John."

The lawyer laid down his knife and fork in his earnestness.

"Yes, and if there ever was a man who devoted himself to this cause of our Colonies, heart and soul, for love of his country, that man is George Washington! I know him well; his Secretary, Mr. Joseph Reed, and I practised together in Philadelphia; and I've often taken dinner with

the General at his friend's house when he was in Philadelphia to attend the sessions of the Continental Congress."

"Wall, now," subjoined the Deacon, settling himself back in his chair, "I am glad to get at a man who has had an opportunity of talkin' face to face with Washington. If that ere was known in this neighborhood, you'd be quite a lion for miles around."

"That is, I should serve for a time as a good reflector of another's light! Well, sir, as I said, I've sat more than once into the midnight with General Washington and Secretary Reed, talking over the course which the English Parliament has pursued towards her British American Colonies from the hour that their first emigrants cast anchor at Jamestown unto this one! Why, it's enough to make a man's blood boil in his veins when he thinks of it!"

"That's a fact, John. There never sat a Stuart on the throne of England that ever thought of the country in any other light than that of a tobacco growin' region out of which he hoped, by a system of monopoly, to reap large profits for himself. Little love or care our poor Colonies got from king or parliament until they found we might be of some service to them."

"Yes," continued the lawyer, now thoroughly launched on the tide of his subject, "and the first interest the ministry indicated in our affairs was to claim a monopoly of our commerce; and so they've gone on down the last two centuries from one high-handed act to another, until they crowned all at last by their Stamp Act and Port Bills, denying us the right of a trial by jury and intending to quarter a standing army upon us. We should be less than men—we should be slaves and cowards, to stand this!"

"You've got the true grit in you, John," said the Dea-

con, rubbing his hands together, which was a habit that he had when he was pleased or excited.

"I intend to show that I have, with some better weapons than my tongue, when I get strong enough for hard service."

"I'm afraid the close of this year won't see the thing settled," continued the Deacon, "though our troops haven't enlisted for any longer time. I don't know, for my part, how or where it's to end."

"Only in one way, my dear sir. It's got to come to that. In a Declaration of Independence, in a total and eternal separation betwixt the mother country and her colonies, is our only safeguard and security."

"That's just what Edward says," interposed Grace Palmer at this point, for she had listened with breathless eagerness to every word of the young lawyer's.

"Does *he*, daughter?" asked the Deacon, with a little smile on the corners of his lips, which first made Grace conscious of the audible expression of her thoughts; and the buds blossomed out wide in her cheeks as she met the lawyer's half-amused, half-perplexed glance.

"Well, I suspect that he's more than half right. It's got to be the talk now, on all hands, that that's the only way to settle the matter."

Lawyer Deming returned to his chicken and to a general discussion of army movements and army measures with the Deacon, such as whether action would be likely to be confined to the sea-board; whether, if an armed force were sent into Canada under Schuyler, that province could be easily subjugated; and what measures would be taken to prevent the sudden descent of armed vessels on the coast of New England, where the defenceless inhabi-

tants were plundered or subjected to all sorts of outrages in order that the British soldiery might obtain supplies for the forces besieged at Boston.

And so the day and the talk sloped into the afternoon before the Deacon or his guest discovered it. Both were then obliged to hurry away, the lawyer promising to return that evening; and having learned that the old Mill Tavern was still under the supervision of Mrs. Trueman, whom he remembered, he formed a resolution to take up his abode there during his stay in the neighborhood. But he turned back suddenly after he had shaken hands with the Deacon at the door, asking:

"Oh, who is Edward?"

"I 'spose he'll be my son-in-law some day, if he don't find a soldier's grave aforehand. He's a nephew of Parson Willetts, and he's in the camp at Cambridge now under Putnam."

"No prospect for me in that quarter, then," subjoined the stranger, with a pleasant smile which the Deacon duplicated. "Pity you haven't another handsome daughter, my old friend."

"We had several, you know, John," answered the Deacon—a little seriousness, which was not a shadow, in his tones.

The lawyer had reached the front gate by the grass-path, which gave no sound of his footsteps; and some absorbing thoughts which linked the past and the present were suddenly put to flight by his stumbling upon a white lawn dress, in the skirt of which his unlucky boot made a small hiatus before he was conscious of it.

"Oh, dear, now!" said the wearer, in a tone of extremest vexation. "If that isn't the greatest shame!"

"I beg your pardon, Miss. I wish I knew some better way to atone for my unfortunate misstep."

Lucy Trueman—for it was she—looked up in startled amazement at the voice. She had been so occupied with the covered China bowl in her hands that she had not observed the stranger, and supposed that she had caught her dress in some protruding nail at the gate. The pretty face grew crimson betwixt surprise and mortification; but high colors were becoming to Lucy Trueman's style, which was of the plump and ruddy kind. She certainly did look bewitching as she stammered :

"I didn't know—it's no matter—I thought it was the gate!"

"I only wish it had been!" said the courteous stranger, with an admiring glance at the blushing face as he passed on.

"Why, Lucy, is that you at last!" was Grace's salutation, as her friend walked into the kitchen. "I'd quite given up expecting you."

"Well, I guess it would have been better if I hadn't come at all; there now, Grace!" exclaimed Lucy, as she set down the bowl on the table with an expression which was pendulous betwixt resignation and provocation.

"Why, what *has* happened, Lucy? Take your bonnet right off and tell me."

As Lucy untied the ribbons of her bonnet the shadow vanished from her face, for her nature was quite too elastic to be jarred for more than a moment at any untoward incident.

"Grace, who was that young gentleman I met at the gate just now?"

"Did you see him? I'm so glad, Lucy! I've been

wishing you were only here to dinner. The gentleman is a Mr. John Deming, a young lawyer from Philadelphia, an acquaintance of General Washington and Secretary Reed. He's dined with them often!"

"Dear me, Grace!" interpolated Lucy, who had drunk in this information with eyes growing rounder and blacker all the time.

"Yes; and would you believe it, that gentleman, sixteen years ago, came to my father's door a little homeless, ragged boy. He had run away from some place near Springfield; his father and mother were dead, and he had fallen into the hands of a hard, cruel man, who worked him beyond his strength, and the boy was never tough. He stopped here to get something to eat, and mother was at once interested in him; and his replies to her questions so enlisted the sympathies of her motherly heart that she kept him until father came home. Then the boy told his whole sad story in such a way that they hadn't a doubt of its truth, and father concluded to keep him and let him work on the farm, and he was overjoyed at the proposition. He remained with us for four years. Papa sent him to school, and, indeed, made as much of him as though John Deming were his son, and I suppose loved him as mother did—almost as well.

"Then a gentleman from Springfield, who knew John's father, happened to be stopping at our house, and inquired about the boy—for there was something familiar in his face—and learned his history. This gentleman was at that time having some business relations with John's mother's brother, who was a merchant in South America—a childless widower, who little suspected that he had a nephew in the world. So the gentleman wrote at once to this

uncle, and he sent for John to come to him in South America, where he remained until the uncle died. I lost the thread of the story here, father was in such a hurry to get off to the fields; but I suspect there was some difficulty in settling up the uncle's affairs; at all events, Mr. Deming went to England, studied law in London, returned some years ago, and has been practising at the bar in Philadelphia ever since. It appears that he wrote to father, but the letter never reached him; and you can imagine his surprise when he came into the room this morning and saw the boy he had long since given up for lost or dead in the gentleman who rose up and grasped his hand, and told him he was John Deming."

Lucy drew a long breath at the conclusion of this story, to which she had listened with motionless interest.

"I declare, Grace," was her first comment, "it's as good as a novel—every whit."

"It seems to me like a romance more than anything in actual life. But why didn't you get here earlier, Lucy, to take dinner with him?"

"Why didn't I? Mother was gettin' up a bundle of things to send off to poor dear Nathaniel, and I had the shirts all to finish off, for mother's eyes aren't good at stitching, and it wouldn't do to wait, as Mr. Minott, who carries the box, leaves to-morrow, and I couldn't neglect Nathaniel even for your sake, Grace."

"Of course not, Lucy," and the speaker's soft hand dropped with a little fluttering caress on the girl's shoulder, which said more than the words did. The next moment Lucy had broken out into one of her quick, explosive little laughs that were always infectious.

"What is it?" asked Grace.

"I haven't told you yet, have I? You see I've brought you a bowl of blackberries. They're the first we've had this season, and your mother said you hadn't seen one since last summer; so I thought they'd be a treat.

"No, you must hear my story before you thank me, Grace. That unlucky bowl nearly slipped from my hands as I opened the gate, and something—I thought it was a nail—caught the skirt of my dress and tore it.

"I exclaimed right out after my fashion, you know, when somebody close to me asked my pardon, and I looked up. Oh, dear me, Grace, I wanted the earth to open for a minute and swallow me up!"

Grace laughed gleefully; for Lucy's picturesque description was assisted by various expressive pantomimes. Lucy joined in with her own, which was a little louder and more demonstrative, to suit her character, and then continued:

"I stammered out some awkward kind of an apology, and he answered me, lifting his hat with as courtly an air as though I'd been a queen instead of a goose. I don't know what he thought of me, and I don't care, either, Grace," with a toss of her pretty head, which was an instinctive affirmation of her throwing the whole thing aside, which Lucy Trueman did figuratively and literally.

"I'd never give it another thought, Lucy," subjoined Grace, the lines of her mouth bending as she spoke into an amused smile. "And come to think, it's of very little consequence that you weren't here to-day, for you'll have plenty of chances to dine with Mr. Deming."

"Where?" turning around in surprise.

"At the tavern; he's gone to take board there for the rest of the summer."

Lucy's face was more expressive than her words, for these were only :

"Well, now, Grace!"

"Won't your mother take him, Lucy?"

"Of course she will, and glad to have somebody like Mr. Deming in the old house; for it's as deserted as an old barn since the war commenced. Nobody stops there now but farmers on their way to town."

At that moment Lucy caught sight of the rip in her dress.

"There's Mr. Deming's mark. Do get me a needle and thread, Grace."

Grace took her friend up to her room, and Lucy was hardly established with needle and thread by the window before the little rapid tongue commenced again :

"Have you heard from camp since I was here?" A tiny arch smile accompanied the question.

A half-grave, half-conscious one answered her before the words did.

"Of course I have; it's a week since you were here."

Lucy gave a little cough which expressed unutterable things.

"I suppose that seems a long time to *you*. Good news, Grace?"

Grace did not answer this time; she looked at her friend with an expression half reluctant, half confiding, as though she was tempted to communicate something, and yet from the nature of the subject was held back. Lucy penetrated all that the gaze said; she leaned forwards, slipped her hand into Grace's, who was sitting near her, and said in a pretty, enticing way :

"Dear Grace, you won't hesitate to tell *me*?"

A *very* soft kiss on her forehead answered first; then Grace spoke in a lowered tone, as though the topic was too deep and sacred a one to be fitted to ordinary tones :

"Edward writes me in the best spirits. He has grown on a very intimate footing with General Greene of Rhode Island, and likes him exceedingly. He dined at headquarters last week with this new friend, and I presume it is through his influence, partly, that Edward has received a captain's commission."

A flash of pleasure went over Lucy Trueman's face.

"Oh, I'm *so* glad, Grace! Won't you feel proud of him one of these days when he comes home with his soldier's epaulettes?"

Lucy was sorry she had asked the question before the words were fairly out of her lips, such a look of pain that fairly mounted to anguish rose into her friend's face. It was put aside after a little struggle, and the voice was steady but low, and full of much which no words could reach, that answered :

"I never think of *that*, Lucy."

Lucy was touched.

"It must be hard, very hard, Grace," she said, with a mixture of sympathy and reverence which fairly sobered the bright face for a moment; "I don't see how you bear it as you do."

Grace's voice had a ring of triumph in it which her friend had never heard before, and from within there came a great light over her face as she answered :

"God helps me!"

The meeting between Mr. Deming and Mrs. Palmer, which took place that evening, was too full of feeling to be

very demonstrative on either side. It is true, the Deacon's wife was shaken with tears, for she remembered two little faces with clusters of bright curls which John Deming had kissed when he last went out of that door, and which lay still under the pillows of the summer grass, now that he had come in again. The Deacon and his guest did not retire into the parlor until quite late, for there were many matters to talk over, and Mrs. Palmer's curiosity and interest were not easily satisfied.

It was long after midnight before the lawyer and the farmer separated. The latter had learned one interesting fact which would have a strong influence in his favor. It was that John Deming had met, while at Southampton, a sailor, whom he had formerly known in New London, and who had, previous to entering upon a seafaring life, worked for a summer on Deacon Palmer's farm. Mr. Deming and the rough sailor had many pleasant memories and associations in common, and in talking of the Deacon one day, the sailor related to his young friend the story which he had heard in his boyhood from the lips of his grandfather, of the rescue of Samuel Jarvys from drowning by David Palmer, at the risk of the latter's life.

And the grandfather of the sailor happened also to be one of the men who had witnessed the sale of the lands now included in the Palmer homestead, and the sailor repeated the conversation which had occurred that evening between the two farmers before the sale was consummated, and in all essential respects it duplicated Mrs. Palmer's statements. The sailor had remarked to Mr. Deming that his grandfather lived to a great age, and his mind was very fond of dwelling on the past and talking over the events of his youth; and Mr. Deming had abundant

evidence that one at least of his descendants had inherited his garrulity.

Still, he listened with warm interest to the sailor's reminiscences of the Palmer family, for anything associated with them was pleasant to him.

"If we could only get hold of this sailor, now!" said Deacon Palmer.

"It would go far towards confirming your title, Deacon. I'm in hopes the fellow may turn up yet on some West Indiaman or whaling ship. What a God-send the sight of that old tarpaulin of his would be!"

"But it isn't in the natur' o' things—it'll be an especial Providence if he should," said the Deacon, shaking his head. "Do you think that the case is lost without him?"

"Oh, no; not *that*." Lawyer Deming tapped the table with a professional air. "I see clearly where Richard Jarvys thinks his strong points and your weak ones are. And there's no doubt that the title-deed being in his hands, and your having neither bill of sale nor record to produce, make the weather looks qually for us. You see, Deacon, I can't quite get the old nautical phrases I learned in going round the world out of my head or off my tongue."

"Don't try to, John. There's nothin' like those old seafarin' sayin's for throwin' out a sudden picter, or hittin' the nail right on the head."

"That's my belief. I think, notwithstanding the thing is certainly on first view in favor of Ralph Jarvys, you have evidence to adduce which will make it hard to get judgment against you. Then one thing is certain—the thing is so involved that it will be easy to get the matter postponed for several sessions in order to wait the

possible appearance of an important witness. And you can appeal the thing in case it should be decided against you. I'll manage that."

"Then I may count on having the shelter of my own roof for a little while longer, John?"

"Oh, yes! For two years at least; and always, if any work of mine can accomplish it. There's my hand on that, Deacon."

Deacon Palmer rose up and grasped the offered hand, and John Deming knew why the old man was silent.

CHAPTER IX.

THE winter had passed, and once more they said in the Colonies: "The time of the singing of birds has come."

Perhaps it had never been said with such joyful thanksgiving since that spring, more than a century and a half before, when, after the long, slow winter of suffering and anguish had gone over their heads, the weary Pilgrims of the Mayflower felt the first soft south-wind in March, and the birds sang sweetly in the woods of a land which one winter had scattered thick with English graves.

No wonder that sweet south wind, those birds singing in the forests, seemed to the pilgrims like a voice and a breath from heaven as they drank in the one and listened to the other in the doors of the cabins they had reared on the New England coast—cabins in these wildernesses whose thresholds were holier and of more value in the eyes of the watching angels than all the mighty temples and lofty palaces of the world. And it was spring again, just one hundred and fifty-five years later, and the children of the pilgrims rejoiced and gave thanks.

It had been a winter of sore hardships, of bitter fear and trial throughout the land. All eyes had been directed towards the Continental army, which had held Boston in a state of siege through the winter; and all patriot hearts had been sick with hope deferred as the slow months roll-

ed away and the army still lay coiled like a great serpent about Boston. There had been murmurings, repinings, and denunciations at this long inaction; the brave and the patriotic had borne and suffered patiently, but now all else was drowned in the cry of joy that came with the first swelling of the buds, with the first song of the birds.

This man, George Washington, doubted by so many, believed in by some, narrowly watched and criticised by all—for the destinies of a young nation struggling for her life in the grasp of the old powerful monarchy that was seeking to crush it under her feet—this thoughtful, reserved Virginian had proved himself worthy of the mighty trust reposed by Congress to him—he had struck the great blow on Dorchester Heights, and the white sails of the British fleet had swept slowly away from the harbor of Boston.

The heart of America throbbed with new courage and hope, and our fathers and mothers rejoiced and were of good cheer as they looked in each other's faces and said: "The Lord hath arisen to our help against the mighty."

Grace Palmer was up in the garret that afternoon of April, seventeen hundred and seventy-six. The roof was low, and the room was lighted by one small window; and the sweet spring sunshine laughed triumphantly along the blackened rafters, and into the dark corners filled with all that miscellaneous household rubbish which had sustained such infirmities after long and honorable service, or broken down suddenly under compound fractures, that it was pronounced unworthy of further duty, and assigned to lasting repose and silence in those legendary habitations of ghosts and goblins—the garret!

The floor was variously carpeted with patches of dried

herbs, and corn, and butternuts—the gold, and black, and pale green making a kind of mosaic. Grace Palmer was bending over a large oak chest which stood under the window; on either side of her lay a snowy pile of flannel and fine linen, every stratum of which had received a most careful inspection. Then a little further off was a smaller pile of pillow-cases, with broad hems and little dainty veins of hem-stitching in scarlet around the margins; and still beyond was a heap of quilts in all rare and intricate devices of patchwork—shells, and chains, and scallops, in which the youthful imagination and invention of Mrs. Patience Palmer had delighted themselves.

“There hasn’t a moth got to one of these things,” murmured Grace to herself, as she surveyed the variegated piles about her with a face which had none of the natural pride and pleasure of possession which they were calculated to awaken, for all these things had been spun, and woven, and fashioned by her mother’s own fingers; and Mrs. Palmer had taken no little satisfaction in reflecting that there was not one among Grace’s young friends who matched her daughter in the quantity or quality of her household linen.

Grace leaned her cheek in the palm of her hand and gazed with a face that grew into mournfulness on the snowy heaps. It was evident that they touched deeply on some secret pain in her heart. They had no pleasant associations with her future; they woke no visions of a fair home, around which gathered all that was sweet and sacred in her woman’s heart; the slow tears swelled into the dark eyes of the gazing girl—swelled and plashed down on the fingers that cushioned her cheek.

Grace had rejoiced, as few women did, in the glad tidings which the spring had brought for her country; but as the

winter wore away she had longed unspeakably for a sight of Edward Dudley, and he had himself written in confident expectation of obtaining a furlough. But the commander-in-chief, apprehensive that the British fleet had sailed at once to blockade New York, in which it was well known there was a strong and active Tory party, had hurried forward detachments to that city, and amongst these was the regiment in which Captain Dudley served. It was a bitter disappointment to the Deacon's daughter, for she had looked forward with greedy anticipation to seeing Edward before May, and there was now no telling where he would be ordered or when he would return.

The town of New London was full of rejoicing and excitement, for the brigade of General Greene had stopped there on its way to New York, but Grace could not bear the sight of the troops or the general rejoicing; and so she had made an excuse to her mother for slipping off up garret to examine the "oak chest," about whose contents Mrs. Palmer was always solicitous.

"Poor mother! Her heart's greatly set on these things, but they don't give me any pleasure!" murmured Grace, shutting down the tears that were about to plash on her fingers the second time.

And then, with the habit of self-control which both her education and her experience had confirmed, she set herself once more to work, diligently bestowing the linen in the bottom of the chest, and laying the burden which was too heavy for *her* heart on that *One* which has borne all human burdens.

Suddenly there came the tramp of feet up the garret stairs, and Robert's eager voice came to his sister:

"Grace, are you here?"

"Yes; do you want me?"

"Guess who is in town?" The youth had mounted the last stair now, and his face and voice answered each other, both full of pleased excitement.

"I *can't*, Robert," thinking it was of very small consequence to her, as she diligently kept on adding new strata of linen to the pile in the chest.

"General George Washington's in New London!" Robert Palmer spoke in a loud voice, emphasizing every syllable as though there was triumph in every one.

Grace *did* turn round now, her face beaming surprise and delight.

"Oh, Robert, is that really true?"

"Yes, indeed; he stops there over night, at the residence of Mr. Nathaniel Shaw. He's hurrying on, you see, to join General Putnam at New York, so as not to be behind General Howe. We boys are going to try to get a glimpse of him."

"I envy you, Robert. Woman as I am, I'd cheerfully walk ten miles this night to get a glimpse of the General's face!"

"You know he's written for three thousand Connecticut troops, and it comes hard on our county to raise their quota. Oh, Grace, I long to be one of them!"

"Do you, Robert?" looking with yearning tenderness on the frank face of the boy. "Father's getting to be an old man, and you're too young for the service yet."

"Well, I'll stay awhile longer and work on the farm—"

"Grace," called Mrs. Palmer, at the foot of the stairs, in an excited tone, which she made great efforts to control, "won't you just come down here?"

"In a minute, mother. I want to lay up the rest of these blankets."

"Never mind the blankets now, child. Come right down here."

Mrs. Palmer was a very poor actress. She could not keep down a surge of excitement in her voice. It hurried Grace down to the foot of the stairs.

"Mother, what do you want?"

"It was *I* wanted you, Grace!" said a voice that was not her mother's.

Grace turned with a low cry at the sound. There stood the tall young officer, smiling down on her with eyes in which many feelings combated together. He stretched out his arms, and there was none to see when he drew down to his lips the cheek of Grace Palmer—nor for three hours after that.

A short time before the first detachment of troops had left the camp, Edward Dudley had been advanced to the rank of Major, and had also been enabled to obtain a furlough from the Commander-in-chief; and he hurried on to New London in his company, for the American army was now on its way to New York, where Major Dudley was to rejoin his regiment.

"No, you are not going to leave me, Grace, for any summons in this world," said the young Major, as he pushed Grace back playfully into the seat from whence she had risen. "Remember through how many long months I have hungered and thirsted for a sight of your sweet face," and he looked at it with an unutterable tenderness, as, with all its unbent lines and the buds in full blossom on its cheeks for joy, it smiled before him; a face so fair and sweet that it must have moved all the loving

reverence in the heart of any true man to whom it had given itself.

"I should think—Edward," and the little pause before and after the name gave it a setting more precious than pearls or diamonds—"I should think you'd hunger and thirst after the sight of something to eat by this time. I'm afraid you haven't had too much of this, by the stories we've heard about you at camp."

"Oh, well, a man who serves his country mustn't be dainty, you know; and then the country-folks did their best for us. I don't look as though camp life had injured me, do I?" as he rose and stood before her.

She looked at the handsome young officer with eyes in which pride and tenderness had a conflict. The lithe limbs, the bronzed face, bore their own testimony of added strength and vigor.

"No. I must acknowledge, a little reluctantly, that a soldier's life agrees with you," her sweet smile just a little touched with gravity.

"And carrying the thought of a soldier locked up in your heart hasn't disagreed with you, my little girl—my one lily, filling my heart always with fragrance." And here he bent down to her lips, more fragrant than any lilies.

"Now, won't you let me go, Edward," she said, in her pretty pleading way, after the first flutter of timidity at his caress was over, "just a few moments to give mother some suggestions about supper."

"Not until you have promised me something which I half fear to propose to you, after all."

"It would be very hard to refuse you anything to-day, Edward."

"Well, then, I've promised to take you somewhere to-night!"

"Where can it be?"

"Into New London. I mean to present you to General Washington to-night!"

"Edward!" she stood still, staring at him in amazement, which quite banished the unusual color from her cheek.

"Now, darling, don't take it in this fashion. It's nothing to be disturbed about. You know General Greene and I have grown this winter to be very good friends; and in short, I've promised him that he shall have a glimpse of you this evening if I can prevail upon you to accompany me. Won't you do it for my sake?"

She drew a long, long breath of doubt, and fear, and dread; and all these had their witness in her face.

"You know, Edward, there are greater things than this that I would do for *your* sake. But I am not accustomed to society of this kind. I shall be quite out of place in it;" she said this with a touching humility which gave her face, for a moment, the look of a little child.

"*I* shan't be ashamed of you, Grace," said the lover, with a glance which surveyed with most evident satisfaction the graceful figure, the delicate loveliness of the face before him. "Dear Grace, you are a sensible girl; you will put all self-consciousness away and not let me go without you?"

She looked at him, and it was not in her heart to refuse him; so she answered, half wondering if it was not all a dream:

"You shall not go without me, Edward," and then received his thank-offering, which was not a verbal one, and went in quest of her mother.

Great was the consternation of Mrs. Palmer when her daughter first disclosed to her the invitation she had received; but this was in a little while superseded by a feeling of maternal pride in the flattering attention bestowed on her child. Indeed, Mrs. Palmer was so absorbed in the thought of the necessary preparations for this visit, that she in nowise did herself justice as hostess at the supper-table that night; but Grace's mind and heart were too well regulated to be long in resuming their equilibrium. So she sat at the table and supplied all her mother's inadvertencies with her usual sweet gravity of speech and movement, and listened to the animated conversation betwixt Major Dudley and her father, her face shining with a light which did not come altogether from the joy of that time.

"What were you thinking that made you look so pretty at the table?" asked Edward Dudley, as soon as he had her to himself again.

"I was thinking, Edward, how good God had been to me in bringing you back safe once more, and thanking Him for it."

At that moment she was summoned away by her mother, with a reminder that it was high time to see about her dress.

An hour and a half later, she came down stairs arrayed for the evening. It was in very simple fashion, and yet there was a fine artistic harmony betwixt the face and the dress of the girl. This dress happened to be her mother's wedding one, which had fortunately been made over for Grace to wear on state occasions a few months before, Mrs. Palmer having resorted to this expedient on account of the war, which prevented the importation of foreign goods.

The fabric was of the richest satin, a warm brown

ground, with crimson sprays of blossoms scattered over it; and it was made in the simplest fashion of that period, with a high waist and trailing skirt, the line around the neck softened by a surf of white frilling; the sleeves short, and around the white arms floated a film of very rich lace, which had been an heirloom in Mrs. Palmer's family.

Her hair was arranged much in its usual simple fashion—the broad puffs caught up back of the small ears, without any ornament; its rich hue and abundance were enough.

Robert had brought the horses to the door, and the family had assembled to witness her departure. Grace stood there, smiling and blushing as admiring eyes surveyed her; but Benny was the first who gave expression to his feelings, which he did with the straightforwardness and emphasis peculiar to that individual.

He had stood by Edward Dudley, his large eyes growing larger and larger as they surveyed his sister, until at last, drawing a long breath, he looked up with :

“Don't she look handsome; don't she, though?”

There was a general laugh at this, in which Grace could not choose but join; and Edward patted the boy's curls and answered :

“I think that expresses all our sentiments, Benny!”

General Washington passed the night with Mr. Nathaniel Shaw, of New London.* A large company was assembled there, consisting of the principal inhabitants of that and neighboring towns, and officers of the army on

* The chamber in which he reposed has been retained of the same size and finish, and even the furniture has been but little varied since.

When La Fayette visited New London in 1824, being shown into this room, he knelt reverently by the side of the bed and remained a few minutes in silent prayer.—*Miss Caulkins's "History of New London."*

their way to New York, and of the fleet under Admiral Hopkins, which had entered the harbor on the previous day; and Major Dudley had many friends and acquaintances among the guests.

A social atmosphere of this kind was, of course, quite new to Grace; but she was an instinctive "gentlewoman," and entered into the spirit of the time with an interest and absorption which effectually banished all self-consciousness. She did not even know that many admiring glances were bent on her from those who were accustomed to the society of the most beautiful women, not only of their own land, but of foreign courts; but if Grace was unconscious of the admiration she inspired, there was another who sufficiently took note of and enjoyed it.

She had a very pleasant interview with General Greene. She liked his fine, animated face, his frank, manly bearing; and his *bonhomme* and affable manner at once placed her at her ease. She chatted with him and laughed—the laugh which was music to hear—at his sallies and his amusing stories of what had happened under his own observation on the morning that the Continental army entered Boston, after the British troops had left and the inhabitants rejoined the friends from whom they had been separated for ten months.

"The women of Boston have borne their part bravely for their country; I wonder whose turn it will come next?" said Grace, as the officer paused.

"I hope it will never be yours," responded the General, looking on the face full of sweet animation upturned to his.

"If it should, I hope that I should do and bear what was appointed me," she said, very simply; but she did not sus-

pect that her face said more than this, as, speaking of endurance and courage to the death, it flashed up to him.

Greene was touched. "I wish every man and woman in the Colonies had a heart loyal as yours!" he said; then he turned, and in an undertone: "Dudley, don't you intend showing this pretty little patriot of yours to the General?"

"I want to show *him* to *her*, for it would be a lifelong remembrance. But you see he's so engrossed, I hardly know how to manage it without being intrusive."

"Leave it to me; I'll see it done," responded Greene, who was on an intimate footing with the Commander-in-Chief.

Half an hour later he touched Major Dudley's shoulder:

"Come with me now," he said.

Grace's heart gave a quick bound as she took Edward's arm and followed Greene into another room where, the Commander-in-Chief stood, the centre of a group of officers, engaged in earnest conversation about the probabilities of General Howe's anchoring in New York harbor.

Greene made his way through the group of gentlemen, followed by the Major and Grace, and she was formally presented to his Excellency.

Washington looked down with features that relaxed from their gravity as he saw the sweet face, touched with that reverence which gave it the look of a little child, upturned to his. He took the girl's hand in his kindest fashion, and then Greene interposed:

"Miss Palmer said she'd walk twenty miles to get a sight of your Excellency, and I thought such a speech deserved she should have that pleasure when she was in the next room to you."

The listening officers laughed. Washington smiled down on the blushing girl.

"It would not have been worth coming any further, Miss Palmer. You would have gone back, saying, 'What went we out into the wilderness for to see!'"

The beautiful face flashed up in sudden enthusiasm. The voice of Grace Palmer fell with its silvery chime upon the momentary silence :

"No, your Excellency ; I should have gone back saying, 'I have seen the Father and Deliverer of his country.'"

There was a little murmur of smiling approval among the officers. Washington was greatly moved.

"My child," he answered, with a touched voice, "may God grant that I shall be all you have called me!" and, with the stately courtesy which always distinguished him, he bowed low over the small hand and lifted it to his lips.

There was no time for more than this. The burden of his military cares left little opportunity for social relaxation to the Commander-in-Chief, and after exchanging a few words with Major Dudley, Grace and he moved away.

The young officer was so proud and happy at the evident sensation which his betrothed had created, that he was about to express his delight to Grace ; but the first glance at her face checked him, it was so child-like and unconscious ; she had been so absolutely free from any thought of the effect of her speech, it had come so spontaneously from her heart to her lips, that Edward Dudley refrained from uttering what was in his thoughts. "It would be like brushing the fine gloss from the flower," he said to himself.

As they rode home on horseback, after the fashion of those times, the young officer asked :

"How have you enjoyed yourself this evening, Grace?"

Her face made answer—turned up to him in the April starlight—before her lips did :

"Oh, Edward, more than I can tell you!"

"I think you must have made a very agreeable impression on his Excellency. Do you know he congratulated me to-night—I shall leave you to guess for *what* and *whom*!"

Her face, full of surprise and pleasure now, showed that she would not have to go far to do it; and she was quite too truthful to affect an ignorance which she did not feel.

"He *did*—why, Edward!"

"Yes, he did. What do you think of your hero?"

"Oh, Edward, I cannot tell you what I thought and felt, standing in the presence of that great, good man."

"*Good* and great, Grace; for with all his great military skill and experience, what would George Washington be worth now to his country if it were not for his good and great heart."

The rest of the way they rode mostly in silence—silence which was to each heart complete and joyful utterance.

CHAPTER X.

THE three days, with the close of which Major Dudley's furlough expired, passed swiftly away. Very bright were the varied patterns which the loom of those precious, hurrying hours wrought in the life of Grace Palmer, making those that went before and came after seem paler and drearier by contrast.

Yet they were not days given up solely to enjoyment, though they talked and read and jested together, and walked out in the sweet April sunshine under the orchard-trees, where the birds sang and the leaves grew larger every day.

They strengthened and exalted each other for whatever in God's good providence was to come—they comforted and gladdened each the other with speech of human trust and tenderness, but which did not rest there, but went out and upward for that great and infinite tenderness in which both hearts believed and rested. So when the great trial of separation came, it did not find the man or the woman unprepared.

The stage which went South left a little before noon. Edward had passed a part of the morning culling out favorite passages of Shakspeare to read to Grace, giving her some suggestions with regard to her future studies, and then he drew a low seat to his side, seated her on it, and laid her head on his knee, and there fell a silence on

them both ; only his stroking of her cheek said much that words could not. At last he spoke, knowing that now the minutes were few, and that there might come a time when she would need the words, much as it might cost him now to say them.

"Be brave and strong, dear, *whatever happens*, remembering that nothing can really harm us, because we are the children of our Father who is in heaven."

She understood what he meant, and lifted her face with a low drawn—

"Oh, Edward !"

Then she turned her head quickly away, but not until he had seen the spasm of agony that went over it. The sight was like a dagger stuck up to its hilt in his heart. He could do nothing now but draw her to him and silently pray God to help and comfort her. He thought his prayer was answered when she looked up and smiled in his face—with lips that trembled, though.

A little later they went together to the door, neither speaking. He slipped a small box into her hand, then he took her in his arms, and in a steady voice bade her be courageous, be of good comfort, and to wait on the Lord ! Those were the last words she heard him speak.

She went back into the parlor. She did not know that she had sat there an hour before she thought of the small box in her hand. When she opened it, a green velvet case disclosed itself. She touched the spring, and then—it was a pity Major Dudley could not see her face at that moment. Only with the first joy of seeing *his* could *hers* look like that. There he was, in his officer's dress of blue and gold, the large, deep eyes smiling into hers ; the lips had the unbent line which best became them—the strong,

scholarly face had its softest expression. Altogether the painting was an inspiration of the artist, and in the corner of the box a little note read: "Keep this, dear Grace, in the stead of me."

"Oh, Grace, isn't it perfect?"

Lucy Trueman was looking archly over her shoulder. She had come in so softly that Grace in her abstraction had not heard her.

"I am *so* glad," said Lucy, in her frank, pretty way, putting her arm around her friend. "It seems as if he *must* speak this minute."

After the girls had looked at the picture a few minutes, Lucy continued, throwing herself into a chair and pulling off her sun-bonnet :-

"I thought you'd feel bad enough, Grace, when the stage went out to-day, and so I'd come over and try to cheer you up a little."

"It was very kind—very thoughtful in you, Lucy," looking with grateful eyes upon her friend.

"No, it wasn't, either," said Lucy, with an amusing little bit of perversity. "I'm not good, nor thoughtful, nor anything else of the kind."

"I shouldn't allow anybody but you to slander Lucy Trueman so," replied Grace, with a little indulgent smile.

Lucy pouted her lips and pinched her bonnet strings; but Grace detected a shadow on the girl's face which was more than playful perversity—it was pain!

"Lucy," leaning forward with eyes of loving solicitude, for Grace had the generous heart which goes quickly out of its own sorrows into others, "is anything troubling you this morning—tell me?"

Lucy tossed her head.

"No, indeed! I should like to see anybody or anything that would *dare* to trouble *me*! What can have put that idea into your head?"

Grace was not convinced; but she understood Lucy, and wisely thought it best to let her take her own time and way for explanations, so she answered simply:

"I thought that you didn't look quite so happy as usual."

There was a pause now, in which Grace continued to examine her miniature, and Lucy to form intricate bows and knots of her bonnet-strings. At last she said:

"Did you know that Mr. Deming was going to the war?"

"Why, no!" looking up in surprise.

"I 'spose not; you have been so absorbed in the society of *one* person that you've no idea what has become of the rest of the world."

"But you know that he's been betwixt New London and New Haven off and on all winter. He got here the night that General Washington did, and as they are acquainted, went over at once to see him. He came back resolved to join the army. They need every man now they can get. He's received a lieutenant's commission since the General reached New York."

"I'm glad and sorry. Lawyer Deming is a noble young man; I hope no harm will come to him."

Lucy tossed her bonnet on the floor impatiently, and muttered something to the effect that if folks would go to war they must expect to take the consequences.

Grace looked up in astonishment at this speech, for it implied that Lucy was both selfish and hard-hearted, and she was neither. A suspicion suddenly flashed into her

mind, followed almost immediately by conviction, as a thousand little corroborative events came to mind. Her heart yearned over her friend, but she could do the incorrigible little puss no good until she had probed the matter to the bottom.

"Lucy, how can you speak so of Mr. Deming? Supposing he should be shot in this war, how you must regret it!"

The watchful eyes saw Lucy wince a little. Then she looked up indifferent and defiant.

"Well, what's that to me if he is shot, Grace Palmer, I'd like to know?"

"Because, Lucy," leaning forward and laying her hand on her friend's arm, and speaking in soft, steady tones, "it must be something to any woman's heart to have her best friend shot down on the battle-field."

"Who said he was my best friend?" exclaimed Lucy, with a rush of blushes. Then she suddenly broke down and sobbed out: "I wouldn't have believed, Grace Palmer, that you'd make fun of me in this way."

Grace drew closer to her friend.

"I wasn't making fun of you, dear girl, but I wanted to tell you the truth, because I thought you might be doing a great wrong to yourself and to another."

There was no use of trying any airs or evasions with Grace. She went right to the point in such a straightforward yet tender way, that it broke down all the barriers of Lucy's pride and self-consciousness. She sank down at Grace's feet and hid her head in her friend's lap, stammering out in a very humble manner that she was "unhappy—dreadfully so!"

"You've done wrong, I'm afraid, Lucy," stroking the bright hair.

It cost Lucy a struggle to admit it, but she was a good deal humbled now.

"Tell me?" said Grace, bending down closer to the hidden face.

It came out little by little, but by dint of some questioning and a silence at the right time Grace got at the whole truth of the matter. It appeared that Lucy had for some time a suspicion, which nearly amounted to certainty, that the young lawyer was interested in her, and she—the acknowledgment stuck in her throat—"liked him better than any gentleman whom she had ever seen."

And then, she "didn't know how it was," a spirit of perverseness had taken possession of her, and as sure as Mr. Deming was by, she was ready to flirt with any of the young officers who stopped at the tavern, though she had an intuition that it gave him pain; but this thought only stimulated her to go on from bad to worse, lavishing her smiles and pretty woman's ways and arts on those for whom she cared nothing in the world.

"I don't know how it was, Grace; I believe the devil entered into my heart." And in her earnestness and remorse she forgot and lifted up her flushed face.

"I'm afraid he did, Lucy."

"Well," dropping her head again, "I used often to be sorry by the next day, and my heart would ache when Mr. Deming looked so grave; and mother, who never suspected what I felt almost certain of, would scold me for 'carrying on' after the fashion I did. But the next time the temptation came I was as bad as ever. You see, Grace, it was very pleasant to have all the young officers admiring me and courting my society, and then to have Mr. Deming see it."

"I don't doubt about the admiration, Lucy; but nevertheless you were wrong."

"I knew it all the time; but things have gone on in this way until Mr. Deming came up from a visit to Bridgeport. Day before yesterday you know he was over here to see Mr. Dudley, and when he returned late in the afternoon I sat all alone by the window finishing up a pair of mittens for Nathaniel. Mr. Deming came in and took a chair by me."

" 'Do you know that I have concluded to go to the war, Miss Lucy?' he asked.

"My heart gave a great bound; but then that old spirit of wilfulness came over me, and I just said as indifferent as possible :

" 'Are you really going, Mr. Deming?'

"He didn't answer for a moment; then he took up one of the mittens that I had finished :

" 'May I ask who it is for?'

" 'Oh, certainly; for Nathaniel.'

" 'How I wish that I had a sister or somebody else to knit me a pair of mittens. And yet I shouldn't care for them unless another gift went with them.' This last was added in lower tones.

"I knew just what he meant, but I was determined that he shouldn't see that I did, and I kept on knitting without one word. At last he spoke again :

" 'Miss Lucy, forgive me—I am very bold—will you knit me a pair of mittens?'

"What do you think I did, Grace?"

"I don't know, Lucy."

"I just answered in the coolest possible way: 'I don't believe that I shall have time if you leave soon,

because I've promised the next pair to Captain Morgan.' "

"Oh, Lucy!"

"I was not so bad as my words, Grace. And when Mr. Deming rose up a moment later, looking so hurt, I longed to call him back, but my pride wouldn't let me. I've been miserable ever since."

"And this is all?"

"Yes; we've only exchanged a few commonplace remarks since; and he goes to-morrow, and likely as not I shall never see him again!"

Here there followed a storm of tears which shook the now thoroughly humbled little beauty from head to foot. Grace saw that this was the time, while Lucy's heart was softened and her pride held in check by this impending separation, to try the effect of counsel and persuasion on the wayward girl. She adjured her, for the sake of her own future peace and that of John Deming, not to let the matter end thus, assuring her she could expect neither happiness nor blessing on her life if she tampered with a true and manly love; and she moreover painted such a picture of Lucy's remorse when absence, or it might be death, had sealed the lips of the man who loved her, that the little maiden was thoroughly melted, and solemnly promised that she would not sleep that night—the last which the young lawyer would pass at the tavern—without doing all that was in her power to promote an understanding betwixt them; and she parted at last from her friend with a warm embrace and a—

"Grace, I do believe you're an angel!"

That evening the young lawyer sat alone by the great birch-wood fire in the old tavern sitting-room. The flames

were attractive as they spun their red skeins up the great pyramid of logs—for the day had been warm and the fire recently lighted—but the lawyer seemed to find very little satisfaction in their contemplation; his brow was moody and troubled, and he tapped the hearth with his foot nervously. Somebody who had come in very noiselessly said suddenly at his side :

“Here are a pair of mittens, Mr. Deming, that I have been knitting for you.” And pretty Lucy Trueman stood smiling and blushing before him.

His brow suddenly cleared up; he took the mittens and the soft, plump hand which bestowed them.

“Thank you, Lucy; but you know what I said when I asked for them—that I should not want the mittens unless something else accompanied them. Do you know what I meant?”

“How should I, Mr. Deming?” looking with sweet demureness in the flames.

“That ‘something’ meant the heart of the giver. Lucy, must I give the mittens back?”

Her answer came a moment later, low and shaken :

“You may keep the mittens, Mr. Deming.”

She was drawn up to his heart, then, with a blessing solemn for its deep tenderness. All of which, and much more, Grace learned the next day from Lucy’s own lips sitting in the chamber that looked to the south.

CHAPTER XI.

THE year seventeen hundred and seventy-six was closing darkly enough over our country. Congress during the summer had cut off every hope of compromise or a peaceful solution of difficulties betwixt the mother country and her Colonies by a resolution which declared them free and independent States—a resolution passed unanimously, and under circumstances which render that glorious event one of those acts of solemn and sublime patriotism which challenge the admiration of the world.

It was just at the time when the war in Canada, after incredible hardships and sacrifice, had sustained a disastrous defeat; for with the spring, Great Britain had poured the flower of her army and the best of her officers into that province to overwhelm the worn-out, scantily clothed, and suffering troops who, notwithstanding, held possession of it. The Declaration of Independence occurred, too, at a time when the British were making every effort to gain possession of New York and the Hudson river—when their men-of-war lay frowning in the harbor of New York, and their “tents whitened the hills of Staten Island.”

It occurred, too, just at that moment when the dismayed nation first learned the extent of the disaffection in its heart by the discovery of that foul treason which lurked even in Washington's body-guard, and extended its ramifications throughout the country. And yet, in the midst of

all this fear and peril, the Congress calmly discussed, with closed doors, that question of which John Adams so truly said :—" A greater could never be debated among men."

The joyous peal from the old bell in the steeple of the State-House proclaimed to the waiting, breathless throng, the blessed tidings that "British domination was over," though the patriots who signed that declaration knew well the price they must pay to maintain it—that for this the noblest blood of the world must flow in rivers—that the land must be ravaged and its homes desolated ; but the fathers counted not their lives dear unto them for their country's sake.

And if any tenderness or regret for the motherland still lingered in the hearts of the American people, it seemed as if the course of the British king and parliament during this year must extinguish it. To the everlasting honor of the States-General of Holland be it written, that, when the English government applied to that nation for troops to assist in subjugating the Colonies her wrongs had at last roused into resistance, the nation refused to furnish them ; but the government was more successful with the princes of Germany. They were subsidized to furnish troops for the British army, and besides this, *were to be paid by England seven pounds four shillings and four pence sterling for every soldier furnished by them, and as much more for every one slain.* We cannot conceive of the amazement and horror which thrilled every heart when the American people first learned that these ignorant, brutal foreign mercenaries, who had become familiar with all that is fearful in scenes of bloodshed among the sanguinary wars of "Frederick the Great," had been *hired* by the British government to BUTCHER them.

No wonder that our fathers and our mothers, trusting to

the God of battles, resolved to fight to the death rather than become the slaves which submission would now have proved them.

Yet there were many men in Parliament who lifted up their voices against this foul act, who pleaded for the fair fame of England and for the honor of her name among the nations, that she would not disgrace herself by a deed so atrocious that the civilized world must shudder at it.

But Edmund Burke, the Duke of Richmond, the Earl of Coventry, and many other noble men who bore testimony against the sin and shame of England's hiring "men trained to bloodshed by Continental butchers" to slay the people of her own language and religion, did not prevail over the power of a ministry leagued against our rights and liberties. The British government stained itself with this disgraceful deed—in what way, Long Island, White Plains, and the ravished Jerseys make answer!

This year seventeen hundred and seventy-six was the most critical one of the war. The country had not yet learned faith in the Commander-in-Chief of its armies. Lee and Gage were plotting to supersede him or be invested with separate commands; even Reed, his trusted friend and counsellor, had placed his confidence in another; the army had suffered a series of defeats.

The British held possession of New York. Fort Washington had fallen, and he whose name it bore had stood on an opposite hill and watched the dreadful conflict, until at last he bowed his head and wept like a child; the sight was too terrible for that brave, true heart, as his men lifted up their hands and begged for mercy of the brutal Hessians, who could not understand a word, and who answered by plunging their bayonets into their helpless foes.

They did the work which they had been hired to do well !
Had not England paid thirty-six dollars apiece for them !

And then came the autumn flight of the American army through the Jerseys, one of the greatest feats of generalship which history ever recorded ; but none could suspect this then, as that poorly clothed, scantily fed army marked its path through the first winter snows of New Jersey by the blood-prints of its barefooted soldiery.

The most sanguine could see neither help nor hope ; unless God came with His right arm bared for the help of the land, its sun must speedily set in a darkness deeper than the December night in which the year was dying. It was almost the New Year, and then—but Grace Palmer's letter shall tell what tidings came :

“ Now praise, and honor, and thanksgiving to the Lord our God, for He hath triumphed gloriously !

“ Oh, Edward, I feel to-day as though I could sing the song of Miriam, as she sang it to the sound of the timbrels on the shores of the Red Sea !

“ We have heard the good tidings of Christmas night—of the surprise and surrender at Trenton, a little after dawn, of a thousand prisoners carried over the Delaware ! And while I write the bells are ringing, and the bonfires are kindling, and the people are holding a jubilee over the good news which the stage brought in to-night !

“ It was so unexpected, too, for we have been in the dark waters for many days ; and I am ashamed to say that hope and faith had deserted many hearts ; but not *mine*, dear Edward, for I have believed and not doubted for my country from the beginning. You will want to know just how we learned the news ; it was in this wise :

"I had just finished my day's spinning, and put away the wheel; mother was busy carding some wool by the fireplace; and father, who had been reading the weekly newspaper, put it down with a sigh and took off his spectacles.

"'Isn't there any good tidings from the Jerseys, father?' asked mother, interpreting the sigh.

"'Not a thing, mother. The enemy's got New York city and the Jerseys in their tender mercies, and Cornwallis thinks his work is done, and is about embarking for England. It's evident enough to me that General Howe is only waiting for the river to freeze afore he pushes on to Philadelphia.'

"At that moment there was a hasty knock at the kitchen door, and before anybody could answer it, to our great amazement and mother's infinite confusion Parson Willetts walked in. I saw at once, by the old gentleman's face, that something had stirred him out of his usual calm. He shook hands with father, and declined the offered chair with a hasty wave of his hand that dismissed all ceremony.

"'No, Deacon Palmer, I can't sit down—thank you. I only stopped in to inquire if you'd heard the news, and if not, to be the bearer of it, as I was going by.'

"We were all alive with interest.

"'It's good tidings, then?' asked father, for the minister's manner betrayed as much as this.

"'Glorious tidings, sir. Praise the Lord,' striking his heavy staff on the floor. 'We've had a victory, Deacon Palmer!'

"'Where?' asked one voice. 'How?' asked another. I don't know whether it was mine or mother's. And the minister told us in a few sentences the whole matter—

of our troops crossing the Delaware in the darkness—of the long, weary night-march in the sleet and storm to Trenton—of the blow struck there—of the panic and confusion among the Hessians—and of their surrender.

“Mother and I cried like little children when we heard it, and I don’t think either Parson or Deacon behaved much better than we did. The minister wouldn’t stay longer; but before he got to the gate somebody else came with the good news, and such an evening as we have had—friends and neighbors crowding in to congratulate and rejoice with each other! Even now while I write it, the tidings seem too good to be true. These men, whose name has been a sound of dread and terror to all of us—these men hired to butcher us by the king and Parliament of England, are now our *prisoners of war*. Truly, it is a time for us to rejoice and give thanks!

“Dear Edward, it is close on midnight, but the stage leaves a little before sunrise, and it must not go without taking you my good cheer. It is as well with me as it can be without *you*, and though it carries an unutterable yearning for, and longing to hear from you every day, my heart is brave and steady.

“I shall send you next week, by Captain Powell, whose furlough expires then, a dozen pair of stockings and half as many of mittens. The wool was furnished by our own sheep, and it was carded, and spun, and knit by the hands that write these words—a fact which I love to think will make the articles of more value in *your* eyes; and be sure every stitch was set with a loving thought of you.

“The books which you ordered from Philadelphia have reached me; oh, Edward, for these I have no words to thank you; but through the long, lonesome days and eve-

nings of this winter they will be the next best thing to having *you* with me.

"We are all in comfortable health, and the war keeps all our hands busy—spinning, knitting, and sewing for those who are fighting for us and for our homes.

"Mother has prepared several bundles of linen for the wounded, and whenever it's needed we have more. And now, Edward, for my sake take care. Do not be rash in the fight, where I know you will be foremost; and for the rest, the God who loves you with a love deeper and tenderer than mine, even, cover your head in the day of battle. And for my country—my beautiful, beloved country—my hopes are alike strong in the day of defeat or of victory. I believe, as I believe in you, Edward Dudley, that her independence shall be acknowledged by the merciless power which now seeks to crush out her life; that the bells of our triumph shall yet be rung on the hills and in the valleys, filling the land with rejoicing.

"How far off that day dwells in the future is not given us to know, *but it is coming!* Through what trial and sacrifice we must walk to it no man can tell; but we have an apostle of our liberties—a man ordained of God to lead our nation to its promised land of peace—George Washington!

"And now, Edward, over the long, dreary miles which lie between us, wrapped in woollens of snow; over the dark waters, above which, without sound of anvil or hammer, the winter has builded its roof of ice, I send to you, with this letter, the blessing and the love, unutterable and unchangeable, in the heart of

"GRACE PALMER."

CHAPTER XII.

MAJOR DUDLEY read this letter by a camp fire on the "gloomy banks of the Assinpink," on the second evening of the New Year—that evening which, notwithstanding the recent victory, was the darkest that had ever closed around the American army.

On the opposite side of the black, narrow stream, lay the mighty army of Cornwallis, waiting only for the sunrise of another morning to commence an engagement, of whose result there could be no possible doubt; for how could the small army of worn-out, half-starved men, make any stand against the overwhelming numbers of the best soldiers of Europe, which lay on the other side of the river?

"Had it come to this, after all his toil, and labor, and sacrifice!" thought the Commander-in-Chief, as he paced the bank of the Assinpink, and saw the camp-fires of the enemy burning in the distance.

Would the next sun, as it rose slowly up the east, be the signal that the sun of American liberty had set for ever! Retreat was impossible now, for the Delaware lay frozen behind him. The British and American armies confronted each other at last, and the general action which Washington had, by masterly manœuvring, and countermarching, and retreating, so long avoided, was at last become inevitable!

It was one of those terrible crises which shake a man's

hope and faith to the centre. Washington looked on all sides, and there was none to help or deliver. Was there none, oh Hand, that guided the Mayflower in its path over the stormy seas—was there none, oh angels, who watched breathless on the winter's day when she cast anchor at the lonely harbor of Plymouth?

There broke suddenly across the darkness a gleam of hope. A plan suggested itself like an inspiration, and so it was. The enemy must by this time mostly have withdrawn from Princeton in order to join Lord Cornwallis at Trenton, and their baggage and stores must lie weakly guarded at Brunswick. What an achievement it would be to march silently away in the darkness, come suddenly upon Princeton, capture the stores there, and then push on to Brunswick!

The Quaker road was newly broken and rugged, it is true, and the night was soft as though it belonged to the late April; but the deep mire would render the roads impassable for men or baggage. Yet, even as Washington pondered, a cold blast swept full against his face, and lo! the wind had changed to the north. The General hesitated no longer; he summoned a council of war.

"What are you doing here, Major?" asked Greene, pausing a moment, as he caught sight of the young officer, who had folded up his letter and stood thoughtfully before a camp fire.

Major Dudley looked up. "I was musing on many things, and amongst them, our situation this night. Unless God comes forth to our help, General Greene, to-morrow will be the saddest day that ever dawned on America!"

"We're in tight quarters—there's no denying it. I'm on my way to General Mercer's quarters, for our Commander has summoned a council of war there," and the General

slipped his arm into the Major's, and they walked along together, conversing in low tones of the gloomy prospects before them.

When the officers parted, Edward Dudley glanced down tenderly on the letter which he still carried in his hand.

"Sweet little patriot," murmured the young man; "God send that you may be as true a prophetess!"

History has kept a faithful record of the result of that council of war on the banks of the Assinpink. The proposition of Washington was met with instant and eager concurrence from all his officers. The camp was broken up. Preparations were rapidly made for one of those swift and silent night marches in which the American army had become so expert, and which they so frequently accomplished as though by magic.

Nothing was left undone to deceive the enemy. The camp-fires were kept burning bright through the darkness, sentries and guards were relieved punctually, and men were ordered to keep toiling until daybreak at the trenches, and then to hasten after the retreating army, which stole softly away in the dead of the night. We have all read of that march from Trenton. We know that the brave little army toiled slowly along the half-broken road, with the stumps of the newly felled trees impeding their progress, and that the sun was coming over the eastern hills, its first golden beams seeming to the eyes of the wearied soldiers the signal of good cheer sent to them from Heaven, when the army reached the bridge over Stony Brook. The brigade of General Mercer, Washington's old friend and companion in the French wars, was detached here to continue along the brook until it should arrive at the main road to Princeton, which he was to secure, and destroy the bridge,

so as to intercept the passage of fugitives; but as General Mercer spurred eagerly away on his beautiful grey horse, he little suspected that his last hour had come—that he should never hear again the voice of his beloved Commander. A few moments later the British colonel, who had just left Princeton at the head of his regiment, caught sight of the glittering of arms along the Quaker road, and not doubting that he had come upon some flying portion of the army routed by Cornwallis, and not perceiving the number of American forces, he faced about to give them battle, concealing his return march in the woods, until, after again crossing Stony Brook, he came full upon the van of Mercer's brigade. There was a desperate rush of both parties to reach the rising ground behind the Quaker's dwelling. The Americans gained it first, and of the brief and desperate battle which followed, history tells better than our pen can.

We know what brave deeds for song and story were done in that morning's sunrise; how General Mercer's horse fell under him with the first charge; how the brave officer sprang to his feet and rallied his men until he was felled to the earth by a blow from the butt-end of a musket; how, rising once more, and defending himself with his sword, he was surrounded and bayoneted over and over, until his blood dabbled the faded grass and he was left for dead on the field.

And at this moment Washington, who had galloped ahead of his troops, burst in sight, and the whole scene lay before him. The British saw the snowy horse and the stately figure sweep by heedless of their galling fire.

The brigade, whose commander lay ghastly on the field, saw the waving of Washington's hat, and heard the cheer-

ing of his voice, as he urged the troops on. They rallied at the sound of that well-known voice, and the next moment the loud shouts of the Virginians, as they emerged from the woods and rushed to their help, told that the tide of battle was turning.

And then the conflict grew more desperate. Amid the flashing of arms and the columns of smoke was still seen that white horse and that stately figure, dashing wherever the battle was hottest and the balls of the enemy rained darkly around it.

No wonder that the young Irish aide-de-camp, seeing that beloved face vanish in the black garments of smoke, drew his hat over his eyes; he believed his commander had fallen!

But when he looked again the horse and his rider emerged from the smoke, the enemy was giving way, and the ardent Colonel spurred up to his General's side with but one thought in his heart, and that was on his lips:

"Thank God! your Excellency is safe!"

The latent fire in the strong heart burst forth:

"Away, my dear Colonel, and bring up the troops. The day is ours!" and lo! in the distance, were the British troops, with heavy loss and in full retreat, to join Lord Cornwallis at Trenton.

And that early morning, which friend and foe alike believed must witness the defeat of the American army, beheld instead a hundred British lying dead on the field, and fourteen officers and nearly three hundred men taken prisoners!

"Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy name, be the glory given!" murmured Major Dudley, who

had been in the fight where Grace said he would be—foremost—as he lifted his cap and wiped the hot perspiration from his brow as he thought of the victory.

At that moment somebody addressed him, and turning, one of the privates from Captain Trueman's company requested him to come to the aid of that officer, who had been wounded. Edward Dudley thought of Nathaniel's mother.

"Is he hurt seriously?" he asked, dreading the reply, for the two young men were much attached to each other.

"We hope not, sir; we've carried him out under a tree. He seems faint from loss of blood."

Major Dudley followed the soldier, and found the Captain lying under a tree, to which his men had conveyed him. He was conscious, but it was well that Nathaniel's mother was not there to see the face of her boy—white almost as the ghastly faces on the field.

Edward knelt down by his friend, who welcomed him with a faint smile.

"Where are you hurt, Nathaniel?" he inquired, anxiously.

"I think a ball must have struck my left arm; I can't move it."

A very slight examination satisfied the Major that his friend's arm was broken a little below the elbow.

"You must be attended to at once. We'll have you removed to some house and a surgeon procured immediately."

"Thank you, Dudley," and then a flash of triumph went over the white young face. "This is a glorious day for America."

"A glorious day, Nathaniel."

This was the only comment Major Dudley allowed himself, as he hurried away in quest of a surgeon.

Captain Trueman was soon conveyed to a farm-house, whose inmates treated him with the greatest kindness. A surgeon was procured, who dressed the arm, and pronounced the wound a severe but not dangerous one, and prescribed rest and quiet; and Major Dudley left him at last, assured that the young officer was in kind hands.

Lord Cornwallis had retired the previous night, and with that contempt for everything American which has always distinguished the English people (although to this there are many and noble exceptions), had declared that he should "bag the fox in the morning."

No words can surpass his astonishment and chagrin when he learned that the General, whom he thus scorned, had once more foiled him, and the American army had again escaped his grasp.

His lordship did not for some time suspect the course which the troops had taken, but the booming of cannon in the direction of Princeton at last warned him.

He broke up his camp at Trenton, and hurried away in great consternation, for he feared Washington might make a descent upon his large military stores at Brunswick; but the march of the British troops was impeded at Stony Brook, for Washington had taken care that the bridge here should be broken, and the enemy did not reach Brunswick until evening.

Lord Cornwallis found his military stores safe, for the tired, worn-out troops whom Washington had led to the morning's battle could not make a descent on Brunswick. But he had hurried them on, panting for weariness, so that

they dropped along the frozen roadside, and with difficulty the army at last reached Morristown.

So the dark cloud lifted itself, and the mourning was changed to rejoicing throughout the country.

The war now wore a triumphant aspect. Confidence in the Commander of the army took the place of doubt and jealousy.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE success of Princeton following so close on that of Trenton, had inspired the patriot heart of America with courage and hope. There was rejoicing around the wide old fire-places where the great red pyramids of flame crackled and blazed through the long winter evenings; but the tidings which brought light and gladness to so many homes brought darknes and fear to a few, and among these latter was the old Mill Tavern of Mrs. Charity Trueman.

It is true that Nathaniel, thoughtful for his mother and sister, had written briefly the day after the battle, stating that a ball had hit his arm, but speaking as lightly of the wound as he could, stating that he expected to be over it in a few days, and, at least, assuming the best of spirits in his letter. But the mother-heart of Mrs. Trueman was filled with anxiety and yearning, for she had received a fuller relation of the wound Nathaniel had received, from a soldier who had been in the battle and returned home.

Grace was making a somewhat prolonged visit at the tavern, for she had been "snowed in" the third day, a circumstance upon which Mrs. Trueman and her daughter openly congratulated themselves, for there was no face so welcome at the old tavern in any time of trouble as the sweet one of the Deacon's daughter.

It was a day of wild storm and wind, dropping down into a wilder night. Two miles off, the white waves of the

Sound seethed and tossed themselves in a great, struggling agony, on which the sky looked with a white, patient anguish, and the wind tossed the great sheaves of foam on the shore, and then went over the land, shrieking its triumph and waving its white banners of snow.

"Oh, what an awful night!" exclaimed Lucy Trueman, as she sat betwixt Grace and her mother, before the great fire of walnut and birch-wood in the sitting-room of the tavern.

The three ladies were busily engaged in knitting mittens and socks; for tidings of the half-clothed and suffering army at Morristown had given a new impetus to knitting-needles throughout the land.

"Yes," said Mrs. Trueman, laying down the heel she was "toeing" off, "this storm must reach a long ways. I wish I could know how that boy of mine was feelin' to-night." And Mrs. Trueman bent lower and added a "forestick" to the cone of logs, in order to conceal the tears which filled her eyes.

"Oh, he's doing well, you may depend, mother," answered the daughter, in her cheeriest tone. "You know he's fallen into such good hands."

"Yes, I know, Lucy," unpinning her knitting-sheath, for it was time to see about supper. "But no hands, let 'em be ever so soft and tender, would seem to my boy like his mother's; and I'd walk five miles through this snow to carry him a bowl of chicken broth. How he relished it after he had that attack of lung fever, Lucy, and used to say: 'There ain't a woman in the wide world, mother, that can come up to you on chicken broth.'"

"You've got one thing to comfort you, Mrs. Trueman," said Grace, looking up in her sweet, earnest way; "it isn't

a light thing for a boy of seventeen to have a captain's commission ; and if he carries the scar of his wound to his death, it will be a fresh honor to Nathaniel Trueman all the days of his life."

The pleasant face of Mrs. Trueman glowed with maternal pride that for the moment effaced all look of pain.

"Bless your heart, Grace," she said, "you always manage to speak just the right word in the right place."

"That's because her heart is in the right place," and Lucy leaned forward in her pretty, impulsive way, and patted Grace affectionately on the shoulder.

"One thing my mind's bent on," recurring to the subject ever uppermost in her thoughts ; "if I hear Nathaniel's any worse, I shall start for Princeton."

"In this weather—why, mother !" exclaimed Lucy, perfectly aghast.

"No matter for that," in a tone which plainly showed that her mind was made up on the matter. "It would drive me distracted to stay here and think of my boy lyin' away off there with no mother's hand to smoothe his pillow, or so much as give him a teaspoonful of medicine. I shall take the next stage if any worse tidings come."

"But, mother," continued the deprecatory voice of Lucy, "you'd certainly be blocked up and freeze to death. Why, it would take you a week to get into the Jerseys in this dead of winter."

Grace saw that argument or opposition only confirmed the resolution, so she interposed.

"I don't believe there will be the least call for you to go, Mrs. Trueman. You know what Mr. Dudley wrote, that the surgeon said there wasn't the slightest danger of fever if Nathaniel would be careful, and there was no

doubt but he would be able to use his arm in time as well as ever."

It was pleasant to hear this again, though it was at least the twentieth time, and turning the words over in her thoughts, the bustling little woman hurried off to prepare supper.

"Grace, have you heard anything about Richard Jarvys or his father lately?" asked Lucy, when the two were alone.

"No," moving a little, as though the words hurt her.

Lucy drew a little nearer and spoke lower.

"Well, it's being whispered round that the old man is a *Long Island trader*, and that his son is in the business too! They're being watched now, and if they're discovered they'll have to leave the place or the roof won't be safe over their heads."

"And in that case, *ours* would be, for a time at least," added Grace.

"You're not surprised to hear this?"

"Oh, no. I trust that I do not say in any uncharitable spirit that there is hardly anything mean or base which, in my opinion, Ralph Jarvys and his son could not be tempted to do!"

"I can hardly keep in my skin, Grace," the round black eyes flashing with indignation, "when I think how that man is trying to get your father out of his own house. But there's one thing," with a smile and blush that said a great many, "he'll have to be smart to get ahead of somebody that's taken the matter into *his* hands."

Grace's smile was very bright and sympathetic.

"Father comforts himself with *that* thought," she said. "He's so much confidence in Lawyer Deming that his mind

is much set at ease in the matter; and then it was left with Mr. Fuller in such a way that the matter will not come up before the fall term, so we are sure of our house for another summer at least; and there is no telling what may occur before that time."

"Still, the thought must be a constant weight and burden for you all to carry."

"Yes; but we try to leave it with the one *Heart* strong and tender enough to carry all our burdens."

"Dear Grace," bending forward with a look half tender, half reverential, "I wish I was as good as you."

"That isn't wishing very much, Lucy," smoothing the black shining hair.

It was quite dark now, but the red firelight filled the room like the waving of crimson banners. Outside the storm grew fiercer as the night deepened. The girls had both laid their work away and sat together in silence, looking into the fire and listening to the cry of the wind and thinking of the absent and beloved, drawn together by that sympathy of thought. At length Mrs. Trueman bustled in with a lamp.

"Come, girls, right out to tea; but I thought we'd have somethin' that would relish such a night as this."

"I'm sure, Mrs. Trueman, you never had anything else on any sort of a night," laughed Grace, as she rose up.

At that moment a thin, pale face was thrust close up to the window-pane, and a pair of large brown eyes caught and drank in every object in the old tavern sitting-room. The face vanished, the front door opened softly, and stealthy feet crossed the wide old hall; then another door opened.

"Mother—Lucy! do you know who it is?"

The voice was Nathaniel's ; but how could it be *he* at such a time, on such a night. No wonder that the three women stood still with a momentary superstitious fear at their hearts ; but the figure came straight forward.

"It's Nathaniel Trueman ; he's some right to expect a welcome here, I reckon !" cried the hearty, cheery voice there was no mistaking.

Mrs. Trueman sprang forward with a cry—not loud ; it was burdened with too much for that.

"My boy ! my pretty, precious boy—have you come back to your mother ?"

Such a hugging, and kissing, and shedding of tears on all sides as followed ; for it was indeed Nathaniel, looking thin and worn enough, as they discovered at last on holding the light to his face. He was too ill for active service, and had obtained a furlough. He had travelled from Princeton by land and water to New Haven, and had left there early in the morning ; but the deep snow had rendered the travelling difficult, and the stage had only just got in.

"Oh, you darling boy !" exclaimed Lucy, throwing her arms about her brother for the twentieth time, and giving him a dozen rapid kisses.

Nathaniel winced a little.

"Softly, softly ; there's a good girl ; remember my arm !"

"How is *that* arm now ?" asked his mother, as though something hurt her, looking at the sling in which the soldier carried it.

"Well, it don't pain me as much as at first, but it won't bear any touch yet. It wants just what I do—a little of your nursing, mother."

Mrs. Trueman's look said both he and the arm would have it.

"To think how many, many nights I've started up suddenly out of my sleep and said: 'My boy's away off on the battle-field!' and it would seem more than I could bear; but to-night I shall wake up and say: 'He's back again; my pretty boy's back again!'"

Mrs. Trueman said this, smoothing his hair and adjusting his collar, for she could not keep her hands off from her idol. The young soldier could not speak for a moment. When he did it was in blunt phrase:

"Mother, I'm hungry."

"And supper's all ready. I've got what you like, too—stewed oysters and chicken pie."

"Those are tempting sounds to a fellow that's been used to army fare for nine months; come along, girls," but he slipped his arm about his mother's waist.

There was no happier table in the land than that one around which Mrs. Trueman's small family was gathered; and when the long supper was over, they all sat down by the bright fire, and the boy-captain laid his beautiful pale face against the cushions of the great rocking-chair, and while the storm howled and shrieked outside, he told his eager listeners stories of camp life in the Continental army—stories at which they sometimes laughed, but oftener sobbed together.

CHAPTER XIV.

ANOTHER harvest had been gathered in; another summer had passed. The battle of Brandywine had been fought in the early autumn, and at last, Lord Cornwallis had entered Philadelphia with his army.

It was a sad day for the patriot hearts in the old city when the triumphant pageant of the enemy swept along the streets. They gazed on the magnificent procession with hearts that failed them, as they contrasted the "splendid legions of British and Hessian grenadiers, the flashing arms, the flaming uniforms, the waving plumes, the martial music," with that army which had marched through the city a few days previous.

They remembered those worn and haggard troops, barefooted and half clothed, as they moved along the old streets, the pale sharp faces telling their own pathetic stories of suffering and sacrifice to the death. And now, along the very paths hallowed by the tread of those bared feet came the victorious enemy, flaunting their insolent triumph in the face of a people whose national existence they were striving to crush, and filling the air with their swelling strains of "God save the King!"

Burgoyne was still on the Hudson, and New England had poured in from her harvest-fields the flower of her yeomanry to dispute the passage of the British general to Albany.

The night of which I write was in the opening of October. The frosts were late that year, and the red scars gleamed only here and there amid the dead green of forest and orchard. It was a still night, the pulse of the earth beating low with the year's ripeness; the moon, large and round among her stars, looked down on the face of the earth; and the white, solemn light lay on every object.

About two miles to the south of the homestead of Deacon Palmer was a long range of low beetling rocks, against which the waters of Long Island Sound beat and struggled with every returning tide. The top of this rock was covered with low, dark pines, amid which the night winds moaned and shivered, while on each side lay a low strip of yellow sand.

The tide was coming in, the white surf rising and falling like broken lilies on the waves; various sail were flashing to and fro on the Sound, looking in the moonlight like great sea-birds with silver wings; but the largest of these, a schooner, lay still about two miles from the shore, from which, before the evening was late, a small boat put off suddenly, made for the land, and swept within the black shadow of the overhanging rocks, which effectually concealed her from observation.

Three men debarked from the boat, made her fast, and then taking their oars, scrambled swiftly but cautiously down on the sand. Two of them were ordinary sailors, in shaggy green jackets and tarpaulins, while the other was evidently an officer of some kind, although he wore a citizen's dress for reasons of his own. This last man looked about thirty. His features were good, but the face had something repellent in it to fine instincts. There was a certain coarseness, and boldness, and sensuality about the

lower part of it; and there was a shrewd, half defiant, and half stealthy glance in the eyes when you watched the man narrowly.

"Wall, leftenant, where's the cargo?" said the younger of the sailors, sweeping the shore, the rock, and the pines, with a brisk glance. "I thought it was to be on hand afore we landed?"

"No, Sam," said the other, putting his hands in his pockets very coolly, "you'll have to wait here two or three hours before the load gets along; for it isn't safe to run the risk of being caught by these rascally rebels at trading with the Long Islanders." The sailor gave a whistle at this, which, though not disrespectful, certainly indicated a good deal of impatience.

"What's the use of settin' us on shore so long afore there's a chance of loadin' up? I'm ready to put in heart and hands to work, leftenant; but this turnin' land-lubber and stayin' round like a fish washed on dry ground for half the night, don't suit my taste," and the young sailor took a jack-knife and a roll of tobacco from his pocket.

"Well, Sam," answered the other, in a voice designed to be conciliatory, "the truth is, I wanted time to cruise round here a little and take the soundings. There's likely to be a descent on this coast before long, such as our troops made on Danbury last spring, and I want to spend an hour or two in spying out the land and see where we shall be likely to get the best hauls."

"That's a fair game with an enemy," answered the sailor, who seemed to have a sort of privilege of free speech.

"Well, you and Jack can go up in the pines yonder, and take a snooze as well as you could in your bunks out

there; only keep one eye open, for if good luck's perched on our banner the cargo'll be along soon after nine o'clock," answered the disguised officer, who mingled nautical and military phrases in a fashion somewhat original.

"Ay, ay, sir," touching his tarpaulin, and the lieutenant, after these brief orders, struck off to the right, while the sailor and his companion steered for the belt of pine woods.

In the wide old kitchen Grace Palmer sat alone that evening. The doors and windows were open, and the sweet spices of the woods came in at both, and so did the still moonlight. Grace sat before a small round table, intently bowed over a book, upon whose pages a pair of candles poured their soft light. One cheek rested on her hand and broke her right profile; but the left was brought out with singular distinctness. You saw the sweet, pure face, the rich bands of hair, the delicate womanly figure; and a pair of eyes saw this, peering through the dismantled hop-vines by the window—a pair of stealthy, watching eyes, whose first look had been one of surprised admiration, but which, as they gazed, grew into a dark, gloating one, which would have frozen the unconscious girl with terror if she had seen it. The light from the kitchen windows of the farm-house had probably attracted the stranger, for he had entered the garden by the back gate and stolen surreptitiously round to the window, and planted himself where he could command the entire room and its only occupant.

There was no one in the house that night but Grace and Benny, who was sleeping soundly up stairs. The Deacon and his wife had gone over to New London to an evening meeting, and Robert had only waited until the harvest was gathered in, and then hurried away to join the army of

Gates at the north, whither Connecticut was pouring in her militia at the summons of her patriotic Governor.

The stealthy, gloating gaze continued for more than a quarter of an hour, intermitted by an occasional glance around the kitchen, and over the outside of the house. The stranger was evidently revolving some purpose in his mind, for he shook his head several times and muttered to himself. Finally he turned suddenly and walked around to the kitchen door.

Grace was aroused by a loud knock. She rose in haste, went to the door, and encountered a stranger, who, taking off his hat, informed her in courteous phrase that he was on business to New London, had missed the stage, and had come on foot nearly twenty miles, and was now thoroughly fatigued. He desired to secure a night's lodging and a supper.

"Will you walk in, sir? I can give you the supper, and when father returns I don't doubt but you can have the lodging," said the hospitable girl.

The stranger walked in, took the chair which Grace offered him, and she bestirred herself to get him a supper; as in those times it was nothing unusual for strangers to get benighted and apply at the farm-houses for a meal or a night's lodging.

In a little while the table was spread with an abundant repast, most grateful to the appetite of a weary traveller. This one certainly exerted himself to be agreeable; made various inquiries about the neighborhood; and chatted about the crops and weather in a style that, though familiar, was not at first presuming.

Grace's first impression of him had been favorable, and she therefore replied to his remarks with more freedom

than she would otherwise have done. But something in the man's manner, and a closer view of his face, effected a rapid change in her impressions. Before the supper was over Grace grew very reserved, while it seemed to her the stranger's manner was almost impertinent, and she began to feel uneasy, reflecting that she was quite unprotected in the house, and she was glad that it was nearly time for her father to return. Grace had, in accordance with the fashion of those times, placed a pitcher of cider on the table, but her guest replenished his glass so frequently that she regretted she had provided it with anything stronger than water; especially as with every fresh indulgence the traveller became more garrulous.

At last the traveller finished his supper, and, rising up, approached Grace familiarly. She started and glanced up, in surprise, and met the gloating eyes that seemed to devour her face. With a sick shudder the girl attempted to move aside, when she found herself seized around the waist and her cheeks blistered with hot, fierce kisses, before she could extricate herself from the brutal soldier's embraces. She writhed herself away in a moment, every limb shaking with horror and indignation, as she turned on him :

‘How dare you, sir! Go out of that door this instant!’

The man cowered a moment as he met the blaze of storm and wrath in that white face; but it was only a moment, as he reflected that she stood there, defy him as she might, a helpless woman, wholly in his power, and he drew towards her again.

“Those airs are very becoming, my pretty bird; but your wings are clipped, and it won't be of any use to flutter now.”

The wretch was half intoxicated by this time, and he made another effort to seize Grace about the waist. She dashed aside the large arms with superhuman strength, and rushed out into the hall. The front door was barred; her pursuer was close upon her; she heard his loud laugh, his fierce oaths, and sprang up the stairs; up, up flashed the trembling feet of the terrified girl, and close on her track came the strong pursuer; if she could only gain her own chamber—and then it flashed across her that the key to the door had been lost for some time; but as she gained the topmost stair her wild eyes grazed an old musket which lay on a sort of shelf in one corner of the upper hall. She knew it was loaded, for her father had told her so when he placed it there, a few days previous, on his return from a day's hunting.

The girl sprang forward and seized the gun. Her pursuer had now reached the landing, but paused, for the moonlight fell broad and full into the old hall; he saw the white face of the girl and the eyes that blazed out of it. She had never fired a gun in her life, but she pointed the old musket steadily now, and her voice rang loud and strong on the night:

“Stir another step forward, and you are a dead man from that moment!”

He could not doubt from her voice and face she was in earnest now; he stood still a moment, and then with an oath broke out:

“I don't believe that rusty firelock is loaded, my girl.”

“Try it at your peril!” her hand on the trigger, her white face set with a fixed resolve that left no room for doubt. So the two confronted each other—the dauntless girl, the

baffled villain—and there was none but God and the listening angels to see. The man stood still; he had plenty of brute courage, but he saw that another step forward would be his last on earth; he glared on Grace with eyes full of baffled rage; then he shook his clenched fist at her, muttered a fearful oath, and went down the stairs. Grace heard the sullen, heavy feet as they went along the front path; she heard the gate open and shut, and then she moved cautiously to the window, and watched the man as he went down the road, in the white moonlight, to the lane. He turned here and glanced back at the house, shook his hand at it menacingly once more, then moved hastily on, and Grace was alone in the still night with no sound but her loud heart.

She went down stairs, shaking in every limb as leaves do in equinoctial gales, but she carried the old musket with her which had done her such good service, and she passed her hand over it with a light caress, and smiled the sternest smile which had ever unbent the lips of Grace Palmer, and which would have reminded one of pictures of the old martyrs as they walked chanting hymns of victory to their death. She had hardly reached the kitchen door, for she was about to seek protection at the nearest neighbor's, when she heard voices, and the next moment her father and mother came in sight. She started to meet them, but could not get beyond the gate. Her father found her here and had to carry her into the house; but she did not lose her consciousness, and in a little while the horrified parents knew all that their child had passed through in the last hour. There were joyful thanksgivings under the farm-roof of Deacon Palmer that night.

About ten o'clock that same night a long wagon might

have been seen coming cautiously out of the woods, on the right of the curtain of pines, and making directly for the low beetling rock which overlooked the water. The man who drove it wore a hat slouched low over his forehead, and a large, light overcoat buttoned up close to his chin. An old canvas cloth was thrown over his wagon, and his whole dress and bearing, with the drooping head and bent shoulders, gave one the impression that he was some drowsy clodhopper on his way to the sea-shore after clams or fish.

The wagon drew up under the thick shadows of the low pines. The driver alighted with a dexterity which indicated a suppleness of limb that would have quite taken one by surprise who had seen him before he entered the pines; he placed a small tin horn to his lips and blew twice, emitting a long peculiar note, which, at that time of night and under the circumstances, had something significant in it. In a moment two sailors, who had been lying on the ground at a little distance, sprang hastily up and approached the wagon.

"I say," said the younger of these, glancing under the slouched hat, "is your name Jarvys?"

"I reckon it ain't anything else, my hearties," exclaimed a loud voice, and divesting himself of the slouched hat and coat in an incredibly short time, the driver revealed the face of Richard Jarvys.

"That craft o'yourn can't sail many knots an hour, mister."

"We've been on shore ever since eight o'clock," said the older of the sailors, in a slightly indignant tone. "Hang it, I've had to steer five miles out o' my course and hang out false lights to get here at all. The villains are

getting sharp round here, and are likely to overhaul a craft if she looks suspicious."

"Where's the lieutenant?"

"He's set sail alone to take soundin's along shore that may sarve him if he anchors round here again," explained the older sailor.

Richard Jarvys laughed a coarse, hoarse laugh.

"He's a sharp one!" was his laconic comment, and then stripping off the canvas cloth, he disclosed several large boxes of butter, with hams, dried beef, cheeses, and various farm produce packed so closely that it was evident the most had been made of the space the old wagon afforded.

"Heave to, my hearties," said Richard, "and I'll give a helping hand. It's well to get this load on board as soon as possible, for there's no telling how soon some spy may be sticking round here."

The men certainly needed no second warning. The wagon was drawn to the other side of the pines, and stout muscled bent with a will to the work, and in a few minutes the promiscuous load was all safely bestowed in the bottom of the little skiff. This was scarcely done when the disguised lieutenant appeared in sight. Richard Jarvys and he shook hands with the warmth of old cronies, and the latter complimented his friend on his "making the most of opportunities."

The subsequent conversation which took place betwixt the traitor and the British officer was of too coarse a nature and too frequently interspersed with oaths, to soil our pages. But in the midst of some vituperations on American character and cowardice on the officer's part, to which Jarvys the younger briskly assented, the lieutenant broke in with:

"But I say, Jarvys, these rebels have some of the prettiest women that ever made a fellow's mouth water. I've caught a glimpse of one to-night."

"Where?" asked Richard, with some curiosity.

"At a farm-house about two miles to the south of us. She was as handsome as a picture; but she'd got the spirit of a tigress, and it blazed out before I left. She'd have shot me dead on the spot, sir, as quick as I would a fox. I saw it in her eyes; but they looked splendid, though!"

"How did you come across her, lieutenant?" asked Richard, his face full of greedy interest.

His companion looked at him, hesitated a moment, and then slapped Richard on the shoulder:

"I'll tell you the whole yarn, Jarvys," he said, lowering his tone slightly; and, drawing his arm in Richard's, the two men retired a short distance to the neighborhood of the wagon.

This conversation had occurred in a loud voice in the hearing of the two sailors. The elder paid little heed to it; but the younger, standing with his hands in his pockets, just where the dark line of shadows cut the beach sands, had evidently caught every word. The moonlight fell full on his brown, sea-beaten face; but it was a shrewd, honest face for all that—one that in peril or need a little child or a dying man would have trusted.

A flash of indignation went over the sailor's face as he heard the lieutenant talk, and as the men disappeared he muttered to himself:

"It's a fair thing to meet a man in deadly fight, and a country that's in arms agin her rightful king don't deserve over tender handlin'; but when it comes to insultin' or harmin' a woman, I say the man that'll do that should be

hung up to the first branch that's strong enough to hold him; and I'd do it with this 'ere right hand without flinchin'. I fancy that ere lieutenant's got some mischief a brewin', and I'll jist steer round and heave to under them thick trees, and find out if he's settin' any trap to catch a woman."

And bidding his companion watch the skiff, which lay softly in the lap of the black shadow cast by the overhanging rocks, the young sailor was soon lost sight of among the pines.

A few questions satisfied Richard Jarvys that the lieutenant had seen Grace Palmer; and he listened greedily to the man's narration of his interview with the Deacon's daughter and the deed by which she at last compelled him to leave the farm-house, full of baffled rage and vengeance.

"I know how she looked, Morgan. It was just like Grace Palmer," was Richard's comment, when the other concluded; and there rose up before his memory the radiant, scornful face of the Deacon's daughter, as he had seen it last.

"What! You know the girl, then?" asked the lieutenant, eagerly.

"Yes; and I bear an old grudge against her and her psalm-singing old father, and I'd like to pay it off," growled Jarvys the younger.

"I'll give you my next quarter's pay if you'll show me a way to trap that girl. I'd like to take down her pride, though. Her eyes flashed like a panther's in a dark night," said the lieutenant, with an oath.

Dick mused a few moments as he lay under the pines, breathing out on the night their sweet balsam and myrrh.

He struck up the sodden leaves into a dingy brown shower with the heel of his boot.

"I wouldn't do it for money; but I might do it for revenge," he said, looking up, and a shaft of light came down through the pines and fell on his face, dark with evil thoughts, just as God's gaze drops clear and white on all the passion and sin of human souls, and there is no darkness that hideth from it.

"I like to hear you say *that*, Jarvys," returned the officer. "A man will do more for revenge on a pretty woman who's served him ill than he will for money. Give us your hand, Jarvys."

And the two men shook hands in iniquity, although no settled purpose or plan of action developed itself in the mind of either. The lieutenant drew nearer his companion.

"It wouldn't be running any great risk to run a skiff over from Long Island some night, and, with a fair breeze, we could get back in a couple of hours, even if we had a hundred and twenty-five pounds extra freight in the shape of this psalm-singing Deacon's pretty daughter. I've more than one man I could trust to do the business, and if we could only set a trap for the bird some dark night—"

The man stopped here. Perhaps even *he* had enough of human feeling remaining to shrink from putting this fiendish plan into words. Richard understood his companion.

"If there's a chance within the next two weeks it shall not slip, Morgan," he muttered down his throat, so low had he fallen in accordance with that "fearful logic of evil" which leads from bad to worse. "But I must bide my time; and you may rely on it I've got some especial reasons for liking to settle up old scores with this girl, though if it should be known round here that I had a finger in

the pie, my neck would have a hangman's rope round it before another sun rose—"

"Whist is the word," said the lieutenant, getting up from the ground, as did his companion. "I must hurry off, for it's getting late, and it isn't safe to lurk long within an enemy's lines. But, Jarvys, you're on hand here; keep one eye open, and if you see a good chance for snaring the game, I'm your man; and two other pair of stout arms can carry it off, let it snap and scratch as it may."

"It would be fierce enough, you may depend on't," said Richard, with a laugh that would have made an honest man shudder. "But I'll keep a sharp look out and send you a signal if there's any chance of good luck."

"We want a dark night and a clear coast," said the lieutenant, in a low voice, bringing his face down close to his companion's.

"I know we must make quick work if we're in for it," said Richard, under his breath.

And the two men went out together from the dark shadows of the pines, and the calm, solemn stars shone down upon them, and the "night was holy," but not for them. And as they went out, a shadow which had lain a few feet from them—a shadow darker than any which the pines threw on the sodden grass, and which did not move when the night wind went softly among the tree-tops—rose up and took a shorter cut to the little skiff rocking on the waters.

CHAPTER XV.

"I SHALL be home by eight o'clock to-night, mother."

Grace Palmer turned as she stood by the kitchen door and said these words. She was tying on her bonnet, and from her left arm was suspended a small basket covered with a snowy towel, suggestive of some dainty intended to stimulate the appetite of an invalid.

Mrs. Palmer was diligently occupied with her pans of milk in the pantry.

"I hope you'll have a pleasant day with grandma," she said. "Tell her I think that elderberry wine will set well when she has a faint turn; and as for that blackberry jelly I never had the luck I did this year. It come in no time. That new receipt's worth a dozen of the old ones."

These last remarks were made to herself. Grace was quite out of hearing; but she little suspected that her last words had reached any ears but her mother's, or that that half Indian boy, who had for several years been employed in Ralph Jarvys's family, had of late been skulking about the homestead, eagerly listening and watching for any movement on the part of its few inmates; or that the half-breed hurried off across the lots to his master's as soon as he had heard these words, and had a long secret interview in the barn with Richard, after which the boy started for the river, put off in a small skiff, and stood for the Long Island shore.

Mrs. Comfort Palmer lived in a small brown cottage, about a mile and a half from her son's. The old lady had been unusually feeble the last year, and Grace had gone over to afford her grandmother such assistance in various domestic matters as old age and growing infirmities rendered necessary.

It was one of those days which are like goblets filled to overflowing with the purple wine of the year. What sweet spices were in the air from pine, and sassafras, and fern; what still winds, as though they had come from some far-off islands of balm and peace; what a heavenly serenity in the blue, deep sky; what a tender, solemn beauty in the sunshine! That day, with its face hallowed and inspired with still, solemn beauty, drew the soul of Grace into its exaltation of calm and praise.

She heard the rolling metres of its joy and triumph; she knew the God who had ordained that day, and set it a joy and praise in the earth, only uttered through it faintly and afar off the blessed story of the calm, and peace, and joy in which He dwells eternally, and which He has prepared for those who love Him! And through those October hours, with their splendors of coloring, their banners of sunshine, Grace Palmer worked diligently about the little brown cottage—setting the rooms in order, arranging the bundles of mint, and rue, and wormwood, and pennyroyal, and motherwort, and labelling the brown packages with such large round capitals, that the dim eyes which had gazed on life for more than ninety years could make them out without the aid of glasses. And in the afternoon she sat down before the small front window and settled herself to mending stockings, and the peace in her heart flowed like a river.

Old Mrs. Palmer bestowed herself down in a large rocking-chair opposite her granddaughter, and there was a twinkle of satisfaction in her dim eyes as they looked out on the day. But a shadow fell suddenly upon the old woman's face, and she said, drawing a deep sigh and speaking more to herself than to her granddaughter :

"It was just such a day as this, seventy-five year ago this blessed autumn ; and yet it don't seem so far off as yesterday when I think of it—"

"Think of what, grandma?" asked Grace, who had caught the last words, and who was just in that fine, sympathetic mood when a story or legend that comes down to us through a long pathway of silent years has a peculiar fragrance and charm.

"The day that Cousin Increase came to our house, and sister Hope and he went down into the blue meadows to gather spearmint. I can see the golden head that was as bright and shinin' like as that tallest feather of golden rod a wavin' by the stone fence yonder, as it went bobbin' and flutterin' like a bird out of the kitchen door ; but it never came back—it never came back, Grace!"

The old woman's voice struggled and sank, the long-buried memories came like the spring tides over her soul and flooded the banks of the years of her life !

"Tell me about it, grandma !" said the girl, softly, as she slipped her darning-needle back and forth among the blue bars of yarn.

"I havn't spoken of *that* day to a human bein' for more than twenty years," continued the old woman, taking off her glasses and wiping them with her handkerchief ; "but I never see a day like this, with the air full of sweet smells as a bed of mint, and the sunshine poured like a bright

flood o' glory over all the earth, but that day comes back and stands still afore me; though all them for whom it brought a mornin' of joy and a night of sorrow have laid themselves long ago on a pillow which no hands ever sewed but the sunshine and the rains.

"Daniel, and Joseph, and Samuel, my three brothers, had gone off huntin' that mornin', and there was nobody left at home but the women folks—mother, and Hope, and I. We didn't think of bein' afraid, though there had been rumors of Injins skulkin' around the frontiers; and a few miles west of our house a family had been surprised at dead of night by the dreadful war-whoop, and the next minute the Injins had broken in the door, and afore the frightened family could get out of their beds and take to the woods, three on 'em were scalped. Of course this made a mighty commotion through the whole region at first, and my brothers never went to sleep without seein' that the dogs were set to watch and that their guns stood well loaded by their bedsides; but as the days wore off tranquilly, and no more was seen or heard of the savages, we sort of grew quiet again and went along as usual. I suppose it's human natur' that folks should get used to danger in a new country, with wild beasts on one hand and savages on the other.

"My sister, Hope Crandall, was a pretty creetur' as ever the Lord sent to make love and light in a household. She was two years older than I, and jest about your height, Grace, with a pair of eyes that was jest the color of the sky to-day, and cheeks like the red side of the peaches on the tree by the barn, and lips that made you think of a pair of rose-buds with the first sunlight on them after a night's shower, and a head that was never still, but danced

and fluttered like a bird's. She was the merriest, happiest thing, light as a snow-flake, bright as a sunbeam, singin' like a robin in May from mornin' till night about the house. Poor Hope !"

What memories, sweet and bitter, set round and sanctified this name Grace did not know ; the old woman was silent awhile, and the girl's rapid needle ploughed its noiseless path amid the furrows of yarn. At last Mrs. Palmer resumed :

" We all set the world o' store on Hope ; and there wasn't a gal for twenty miles around that could hold a candle to her at a singin' school or a corn huskin', and she fairly turned the heads of the young farmers in the neighborhood. But Cousin Increase won the prize, and he deserved it !"

" Who was Cousin Increase ?" the young, steady voice slipped with sweet and singular contrast among the old woman's tremulous tones.

" He was the son of my father's brother's second wife by her first husband. He was a handsome young fellow, straight and lithe, and brave as a lion, runnin' over with fun and spirits, and yet tender-hearted as a little child. Well, *that* mornin', I remember, mother sat by the chimney corner quarterin' apples for winter use, and I was in the pantry stampin' the great yellow balls o' butter with the pattern of an anchor which my father had brought from the old country when he was a boy. Hope was talkin' to me where she stood jest outside the kitchen window, for she was nailin' up a rosebrier that the wind had shook down a night or two before. Suddenly a voice that made us both start, said : ' Let me have the hammer, Hope. I can do that a great deal better than you.'

"Hope gave a little scream, and turned her pretty head: 'I declare, Cousin Increase, what a fright you gave me. I should as soon thought of seein' the man in the moon as you this mornin',' she said, with her laugh, that was a sweeter thing to hear than the first robins in March.

"Should you, Hope? Let me have the hammer?"

"No, you shan't,' with a toss of her golden head. 'I'm goin' to nail up the rosebrier myself.'

"They had a playful little struggle betwixt the two, and I kept on at work with my pats of butter, for Cousin Increase hadn't seen me, and I s'pose Hope had forgotten all about my bein' in the pantry. *He* got the hammer in a few moments and Hope pelted him with greenbrier leaves and called him a wicked assailer of helpless women, for she was in high spirits that mornin'.

"At last, Increase got to work, and I remember his sayin': 'I ought to have my own way this mornin', for I've walked ten miles since breakfast.'

"Why, Cousin Increase, what in the world have you done that for?" asked Hope, who stood by him now watchin' his work.

"Jest for the longin' I had to see your sweet face once more, Hope Crandall,' said the young man, and his voice said more than his words did.

"Cousin Increase,' said Hope, and then she stopped short suddenly as though she didn't know exactly what next to say.

"The hammer dropped from the young man's hands. He looked up in the sweet blushin' face that was like a carnation pink, with the white and red vanishin' in and out of it.

"It's the livin' truth, Hope,' said Increase Dale, as I had

never heard him speak afore. 'I've carried that sweet face o' yourn in my heart a shinin' and a smilin' down all the hours o' the last week, and at last I got to hungerin' and thirstin' for the sight of it until I couldn't stand it any longer, and I jest started off this mornin' resolved to have the blessed sight of it once more.'

" 'Oh, Increase,' answered Hope, with her little trill of a laugh as though her breath was too short to carry it out, and it broke and fell through of its own sweetness, 'what a *way* you men do have of sayin' things to us girls! It's well we know how much it's good for.'

"Cousin Increase seized them little white hands. 'I do mean it in my soul afore God, Hope Crandall!' he said, in a voice that didn't leave room for a doubt. 'And Hope, I have been dreamin' all this week of not seein' your face to-day only, but of havin' it by my side all the days of my life; of havin' it to make sunlight and gladness in a home of my own; to make strong my arm and brave my heart, and sweet my toil for that home. Oh, Hope, it'll be a lovin' heart that'll shelter that face o' yourn—fairer than all the picters and flowers in the whole world; and if the roof isn't as high, and the home won't be as grand which I offer you as some others could, still you'll never find a man that'll try harder to make you happy, or that'll love you jest the same, let whatever of change, or sickness, or sorrow come to you, Hope.'

"I heard all this behind the pantry shelves with the butter stamp in my hands, and the tears was a runnin' down my cheeks when Cousin Increase got through. It ra'ly seemed to me that he was inspired for that pertickerler occasion. I al'ays knew that Increase was a likely young man, but it appeared to me that our minister himself

couldn't have got through with it handsomer'n that. No gal in the world could have helped feelin' it! As for Hope, she stood stock still a minute, and then I heard a little sob not louder than a baby's.

"Cousin Increase put his arm around her waist, and I knew then how the matter would turn; but it came into my mind all of a sudden that I had no right to be standin' there and listenin' to things which was sacred betwixt my sister and Cousin Increase; so I got out of the pantry on tip-toe, and a good long while after, the two young folks came into the house. I knew with the first glance that the matter was all settled. I never had seen my sister look quite so pretty as she did that day, with the roses runnin' up into and blossomin' out wide in her cheeks, and her face full of a new, bright, shy gladness. Poor Hope!" The old woman's voice broke down here, again.

"Why, grandma! what makes you call her 'poor,'" asked Grace, her stocking lying still in her lap, the darning-needle making a bright shaft in the half-mended heel. "*I don't think she was, I'm sure.*"

"Wait until you've heard the whole story, Grace," answered the voice of the old woman, half under its breath, and with such solemn impressiveness that a chill passed over the listening girl.

"We all of us had a happy day of it. I was glad for my sister's sake, and I loved Increase like a brother, and I wondered what the boys would say when they came to hear of it; and I busied myself with thinkin' what a handsome bride my sister would make with roses in her hair, and a silk dress brought all the way from Cheeny or London. I was a young thing then jest out of my fifteenth birthday, and I pictured to myself all the talk and wonder

there'd be the first Sunday that Increase and Hope would be cried in meetin'. I was thankful enough that I hadn't got to go through with that ere; and I wondered how Hope would stan' it; and then there would be the grand quiltin' to come off, and all the bustlin' and fixin', and the weddin' cake.

"Ah, well, we ain't young but once in our lives, and it was a massy that what was jest ahead was hid from me. But that afternoon my mother, who was dryin' her herbs, found out that she hadn't laid up any spearmint to mention, and she was sot that she never should dare ventur' upon a winter without it, and Increase and Hope offered at once to go after some; for it grew thick on a bank about half a mile from our place, near a spot of water called Blue Pond, lyin' jest beyond a pretty thick piece of woods.

"I remember they asked me to go along, but I thought it was nat'ral the young folks should like to be alone, and made some excuse for stayin' behind, and they sot off. I can remember, too, that Hope turned and smiled jest as she got to the back door. 'Comfort,' she said, 'I'll be back in time to help you get supper for them boys. They'll be as ravenous as a pack o' wolves let loose, I expect,' and then she went out.

"But, Grace, it has al'ays seemed as though that smile of my sister's, as she stood in the kitchen door, has followed me like a shinin' light through all the long years of my life, and never flickered nor gone out, for it was the last time my sister Hope ever smiled on me!"

"Grandma!"

"Wait a minute, dear child, and you shall know all there is to tell; and that's fearful enough. I sat at my

spinnin' wheel and chatted with mother that afternoon about Increase and Hope. I didn't tell her what I had overheard; but I saw she suspected that somethin' had been said to Hope; and when I told her that I'd made up my mind Increase would be her son-in-law some day, she looked pleased and said she thought it would suit father, for Increase was a likely, forehanded young man, with steady habits, though he was a little givin' to sowin' wild oats; but then, it wasn't reasonable to expect young folks would be old uns.

"I began to feel a little uneasy as the day began to settle down, and to glance out of the east winder towards the turnpike to see if Increase or Hope were on their return, though there wasn't nothin' in the world to be afeard on, as I could tell, and I tried to shake it off. But I grew more and more uneasy as they didn't come. At last I sot away my spinnin' wheel, and was goin' to put on the tea-kettle, for the sun had got on top of the mountain, when suddenly our next-door neighbor came runnin' into our house pantin' and breathless :

" '*Miss Crandall,*' he cried out, 'has any of our folks gone over to the woods east of the turnpike this afternoon?'

" 'Why, yes,' says mother, 'my daughter and her cousin's gone over to Blue Pond to gather some spearmint for me.'

" 'Wall, my man, who's been to work in the fields at the south of the Pond, has jist brought me word that he's heard firin' in that direction, and a few minutes later he seen two savages makin' tracks through the bushes on the right.'

" 'Oh, Mr. Jackson, who knows but what they've shot my daughter!'

I see my poor mother's face as it looked that moment,

standing by the chimney-piece, and it was no whiter when I saw it years after, as they laid the grave-cloth over it.

"'Wall, maybe there's no harm done, *Miss Crandall*," said neighbor Jackson. 'I'll hunt up the farm-hands, and we'll start right over to the Pond,' and he hurried off in a way that showed he feared there might have been foul play.

"He had got only a few rods from the door when he saw some one beckonin' to him from the turnpike. I must hurry over this part, Grace," speaking in a faint, rapid voice, as though the words hurt her. "Neighbor Jackson found Increase there; he had been shot in the leg, and had crawled more than a quarter of a mile from the woods in quest of help—" Mrs. Palmer paused here.

"But Hope, grandma, what became of *her*?"

"*She* saw the Injins first. They both fired together; but Hope saw that one had aimed at the heart of Increase, and she sprang before them! Child, *she saved his life with her own!*"

"Oh, grandma!" Grace covered her white face with her hands.

The old woman rose up and walked back and forth, wringing her aged hands and sobbing passionately for the sister, whose grave more than seventy springs had quilted with fresh grasses.

"It broke all our hearts," sobbed Mrs. Palmer. "I shall never forget the moment when they brought her back to the house, with her damp hair lyin' all about her white, cold face—she that went out of it so full of life and joy an hour before!"

"Was she quite dead, grandma?"

"Not quite, child. She opened her eyes once, and knew

us all and what had happened. It was about an hour after she was brought home, and the boys had got back then. She said good-by to us all, and told Increase that the home she was goin' to would be brighter than the one he had promised her on earth, and that he must not grieve for her, for every day and every night would bring him a little nearer to her, and then—oh, Grace, I can't tell any more!" for Mrs. Comfort Palmer had walked down the years to the land of her youth, and the bitter anguish of that hour came back to her when she stood by the bedside of her murdered sister.

And Grace wept too, for this great-aunt of hers whose life had gone out in its first years of blossoming, and it was a long time before she asked softly :

"And Increase, grandma?"

"It didn't kill him, but that was all. He was laid up at our house for four months with a broken limb and a brain-fever. We thought he'd never get up again; but he did at last, and even mother, though her heart was broken, used to try to comfort him when he'd say:

"If it had only been *me* instead; if *I* could only have given up my life for Hope's!"

"The next spring the doctor said he must take a sea voyage; and we persuaded him to go in a tradin' vessel to Virginny. He got stronger with new life and change of scene; and used to write mother and me cheery letters, though he al'ays spoke of Hope with a sweet, sad tenderness, which showed that his heart carried her memory in the hope and trust that God would have us carry those who are with Him.

"At last, in the next fall, Increase started for home. But, in a heavy storm at sea, the ship foundered and went

down. There was only a few of the crew saved, and in a little more than a year Increase was with Hope; and for the pleasant home he was to have made her on earth, they had one not builded with hands."

"But its builder and maker was God!" answered Grace, and the smile was holy that flashed up triumphant through her tears.

"I've rested on that thought, Grace," said the old woman, wiping her wrinkled face stained with tears for the sorrows of her youth. "Oh, I haven't lived ninety years to prove the God I've trusted unfaithful to His promises, or that He ever sends a burden so heavy that He isn't able and ready to carry it for us."

Grace looked at her grandmother. The passionate grief of that aged face had subsided, and the calm and the peace that God gives had taken its place.

"Oh, grandmother!" exclaimed the girl, "it's a good thing to go down to old age bearing such testimony as this!"

"Yes," smiled the pale lips, "all of 'em got to the end of the journey long ago, and left me far behind. But they didn't go without each leavin' a signal for me, and I've followed on and I shall be with 'em pretty soon—pretty soon *now*," and the old woman repeated the words as though they had a pleasant sound to her; and Grace looked at her grandmother and thought that the smile on her aged face made it beautiful, for it was the smile of a heart at peace with God!

CHAPTER XVI.

It was quite dark when Grace set out from her grandmother's for home. The road was a lonely one, lying for a considerable portion of the way betwixt open pastures, and then suddenly glancing to the right, for nearly half a mile, it cut through some half-cleared land, where the charred and blackened trunks of old trees rose weird and ghastly in the dim starlight.

This newly opened road considerably shortened the distance home. Perhaps Grace would have chosen the longer and more frequented one, had she not been preoccupied with the story which her grandmother told her that afternoon. The tragical history had somehow strangely affected her. The face of the great-aunt, which had been dust so many years before her own had seen the light, seemed to shine in all its young, sweet beauty before her thoughts, as she went with her light rapid feet down the road, the still dark pasture lying on either hand, and overhead the large autumn stars in a sky without seam or faintest puffing of cloud. But when she came to the point where the road turned abruptly into the woodland, and the black shadows and the ghastly trunks of the trees rose suddenly before her, Grace's thoughts came back to the present with a little thrill of fear.

It was a gloomy spot enough in the night, furnishing just the right sort of background for any amount of fearful images and tragedies. But in Grace Palmer both super-

stition and imagination were controlled by strong moral forces and enlightened judgment, and no fear of spectral apparitions haunted her thoughts. Still she was a long distance from any house; she had full half a mile to walk before the road opened into the meadows, and she entered among the weird shadows with a little chill of dread.

Her swift feet had not carried her far, when a dark figure sprang suddenly out from the woods into the path and approached her. Her heart stood still; so did she; a cold shudder made a faintness in every limb, and prevented her moving.

The dark, swift object drew close to her. She caught under the dim starlight a sailor's tarpaulin, but could not distinguish the features beneath. A voice spoke now low, but with that prompt authority which sudden exigencies in life sometimes confer.

"Face about and get out of these woods, ma'am, as quick as your feet'll take you; there's breakers ahead!"

Something in the man's manner or voice carried in the darkness a conviction of its truth, and Grace turned to fly. Then in her bewilderment and terror a fear came over her that this might be a snare laid to entrap her, and she turned back again irresolute.

"Hurry off," said the rapid voice, authoritatively. "Take the road to the right, for your life or more depends on't."

She *felt* the honest truth of the voice, and yet how came it there, whose was it, and what did it know of her or dangers that beset her? Grace did not yield to her instincts, but to these second thoughts. She stood still quaking in every limb; but she spoke:

"I shall not stir one step until I know—"

The voice broke in here, full of indignant eagerness:

"Girl," it said, "you're wastin' time that more'n your life hangs on. If I'd wanted to harm ye, I shouldn't sot about it in this way, for the farther I got ye into the woods the better. But I'm here to serve ye, and to save ye, too, from one o' the foulest plots that ever the devil put into a man's brain. But every minute's precious, and I'm one agin many, and in the name of all that a woman holds sacred, don't stand talkin' here!"

Grace could not doubt longer. She turned, and her light feet hardly grazed the ground, but her loud heart fairly choked her breath, and a horrible fear gave new strength and speed to her flight.

The man in the tarpaulin stood still a moment, and then his ear caught a sound of cautious steps on the dry grass; he sprang behind the stump of an old oak, and crouching down, was effectually concealed from sight in a moment. He had barely done this, when some one came with swift but almost noiseless steps into the road, carrying a tin lantern, which, as he held it out and peered up and down the road, disclosed the wily, cunning face of the half-breed who lived with Ralph Jarvys.

The small, keen eyes of the Indian had the look of a dog's when it has scented the game; he placed his hand over his mouth and whistled—not loud; the note was soft and incisive, and could have reached to a great distance. A moment later, two men rushed up from below and joined the half-breed; one of them asked, not loud but eager:

"Have you scented the game?"

"Yes; but it seems to have got scared and took to flight. I jist caught sight of it runnin' towards the pastures."

"This dark hole must have frightened her, Tim, afore

she'd got far into it," said a voice, which might easily have been recognised as the one that had held a conference with Richard Jarvys nearly two weeks before under the pines on the rocks by the Sound. "After her, all hands; we'll bag her yet;" and the three men started on the road over which the trembling limbs of Grace Palmer had sped less than two minutes before.

"There's a shot in this 'ere musket that'll have some-
thin' to say fust, as true as my mother's last blessin'," murmured the sailor behind the oak stump, and he plunged out and hurried after the men, and the sound of their heavy feet drowned his that came after.

Grace Palmer heard the men behind her, and an oath of triumph as they first caught sight of her white dress.

"God help me!" cried the poor girl, as she panted forward. But they gained on her. She was no match for the half-breed, who outstripped the others in the race. He had thrown away his lantern now, and seemed to skim the ground. Grace heard him close behind her, and twice her shrieks for help rang out and curdled the night with their loud horror. But the nearest farm-house was a third of a mile distant; she could not hope it would reach the ears of its inmates, and the next moment she was clutched about the waist by a pair of strong, wiry arms, in whose grasp she wrestled and struggled vainly.

"I've got her fast," cried the half-breed, and the others came up, and another pair of arms encircled her roughly, and a voice which froze the blood of Grace Palmer with horror as she recognised it, cried out:

"Ha, ha! my pretty bird; you can fly as well as you can threaten; but wings nor tongue won't serve you now. You're done for it this time."

Hardly had this taunt crossed the wretch's lips when the sharp report of a musket filled the air. Then the half-breed loosened his hold on Grace with a low yell of anguish.

"To the boat, lieutenant, or we shall be dead men!" cried one of the trio, in a voice of terror.

In his surprise and alarm the lieutenant had so far released Grace that she struck off his arms and sprang out from them; he seized her again; there was a second shot and a shout in the woods. There was no doubt now but their nefarious plan was discovered; a panic seized the men, for the three took to the woods, and a little later the sailor came up and found Grace Palmer lying senseless on the ground.

"Father, it's more'n time Grace was home," exclaimed Mrs. Palmer, glancing up at the tall clock in one corner of the kitchen, and then lifting up a handful of dried currants from a large wooden pail which she was "picking over," before stowing away for winter use.

The Deacon glanced up from his paper. He was so occupied just then with the movements of the army on the upper Hudson that he was not in a very receptive or sympathetic mood for anything else.

"Oh, well, don't fret, mother," he said, in a half-absent way. "Folks don't usually get home, especially women, as soon as they expect to, when they go a visitin'. They're gettin' General Burgoyne into tight quarters every day. The chances seem to grow smaller of his army's ever seein' Albany."

Mrs. Palmer heaved a long deep sigh. "I hope my poor Robert will get along safe," she said, after the fashion

of a woman going at once from the general to the particular case, which of course showed she was not always full of Spartan patriotism and sublime self-abnegation; but then she was Robert's mother, and she couldn't forget that always, even for her country.

The Deacon did not catch this remark, or he certainly would have responded to it. Mrs. Palmer heaved another sigh, and looked at her youngest son, who sat on a low stool at her right hand, and who was just then engaged in smothering a yawn.

"Benny," she said, briskly, "get a light. It's high time you was in bed, after such a tramp as you've had over to the meadows after cranberries."

"I ain't sleepy one bit," stoutly asseverated the boy, opening his black round eyes to their fullest power of distension. "Let me sit up till Grace comes. I want to say my prayers to her."

"Benny, you a Deacon's son, and talk about sayin' your prayers to your sister!"

Benjamin Palmer was not one to yield his ground without a protest.

"If I mean right, it don't make so much difference about the words, mother," he said, with an air of oracular gravity, that sat strangely on his young and roguish face. "And Grace has been teachin' me a new hymn a great deal prettier than 'Now I lay me,' and I can't go to sleep till I've said it to her."

"Oh, Benny!" This ejaculation was a laconic admission that the young gentleman had gained his point, and it very frequently terminated any small difference of opinion betwixt Benny and his mother; the ejaculation being usually accompanied by a little covert smile and fond

glance on the mother's part which gave the words an emphasis Benny was quite shrewd enough to interpret.

Another half hour ticked itself slowly away. The Deacon read his paper. Mrs. Palmer diligently blew the dust out of handfuls of currants; and Benny watched his parents with sleepy eyes, and gaped, and nodded, and sat remarkably straight, and looked fierce with animation whenever his mother's eyes went that way. At last Mrs. Palmer spoke again, and this time her tones had the effect of thoroughly rousing the Deacon from his paper.

"Father, it's gettin' late, and I do feel uneasy about Grace. It isn't safe for girls in these war times to be out nights, with Long Island traders all round the country and the enemy landin' every few nights on our coast. I've no doubt it was a Britisher came here the other night when we was off to meetin', and I can't feel right to have her out after dark."

"Wall, 't isn't likely Nathaniel 'll let her walk home alone."

"Where's she to come across him, I wonder?" the berries making a black cataract from her palm to the pan.

"Why, she's gone over to the tavern, ain't she?"

"Father!" there were several meanings in Mrs. Palmer's emphasis of that correlative, "I *do* believe that paper has crazed your wits. Don't you know I told you at dinner that Grace had gone over to grandma's to do up little chores round and put her to rights afore cold weather sets in?"

"Oh, yes, I remember now," said the Deacon, a little apologetically. "Strange it should have slipped my mind. It's a lonely road from mother's—Grace ought to be home before this"

"I hope she won't take the new road that leads round by Cranberry Meadows. Them half-cleared woods is an awful place in the night—awful!"

The Deacon went to the window and looked out.

"I don't know but I'd better set out for her?" he remarked, uneasily.

"If you ventur' out, you'll be sure to be laid up with the rheumatis, it's so late in the fall."

Ten minutes more pulsed slowly away in the old clock—ten minutes that were passed in more anxiety on the part of the Deacon and his wife than either would have liked to acknowledge; and then there was a loud knock at the door. When the Deacon opened it, his first glance met a man in a sailor's garb bearing a limp figure in his arms. Then Mrs. Palmer's shriek rang through the kitchen. She had followed her husband half way to the door.

"Oh, father, they have killed our child!"

It was such a cry as one would pray never to hear again. The sailor came right in.

"No, ma'am," he said, in his loud, hearty tones, that carried conviction with them. "A dash of cold water or a swig of brandy 'll bring the breath back, for she's had enough to skeer it out of her!"

They laid Grace down on the settle, the fair face drooping deathlike on the cushions of red and yellow patchwork. Benny brought a pitcher of water, and stood looking on while his father and the sailor bathed the girl's temples. For once Mrs. Palmer's practical efficiency seemed to have forsaken her. She had started for a decanter of brandy, but her limbs trembled so, she had fallen into a chair by the door; and there the poor mother sat, with her face white as her daughter's, watching for the first sign of

returning consciousness. It was not long in coming. A start and a shudder; then Grace Palmer opened her eyes.

"Oh, my daughter, my daughter!" sobbed her mother, rushing forward.

Grace stared around her from one to the other. Then a chill of terror, or of some awful memory, convulsed her. She sprang up, and cried out:

"Oh, father, am I safe now—haven't they got me?"

"Safe under your father's roof, my darlin' child!" answered the fervid voice of the Deacon. "Don't be frightened, Grace, nobody shall harm you here." He had soothed her to sleep sometimes in his strong arms with just that tone.

"But how came I here?" with the fright still in her face.

It was time now for the sailor to step forward:

"It was I that rescued ye, ma'am," he said, taking off his tarpaulin with instinctive courtesy, and his manner had that unconscious dignity which the joy of a good deed done confers on the roughest and coarsest man. "I was on hand to serve and to save ye, as I told ye in the woods, though you wasn't over quick to act on my caution; and no wonder, either!"

Grace began to realize the truth now. She sat up and looked in the honest, weather-beaten face of her preserver:

"Oh, father, he has saved me from a fate worse than death!" she sobbed.

"The Lord reward you," answered the broken voice of Deacon Palmer. "You're welcome to anything I possess in this world; but that won't pay you for savin' my child."

"I don't want any pay, sir. I got wind some days ago

that there was to be foul play along the coast, and that a woman was to be the victim of some infernal scheme of revenge and villany, and I took a vow that so long as I'd got a right arm to help her she shouldn't be smuggled off without my feelin' I'd done all one man could to save her."

"Oh, young man, have you got a mother?" exclaimed Mrs. Palmer, as she turned round from administering a cordial to Grace. "If you have, *she* can best tell how I feel towards you this hour for savin' my daughter!"

The young sailor drew his hard hand across his eyes: "It's more'n ten years," he said, "since she laid down where the singin' birds couldn't wake her; but if I ever did a good act or a kind turn to a mother in distress, I did it for the sake of my mother and the memory of her last blessin'."

The cordial had revived Grace, for she had the fine recuperative powers of youth and health. She sat up now and leaned her head on her father's shoulder.

"Now, friend, let us know what has happened and who has tried to wrong my child?" asked the Deacon, and his eyes flashed fire.

"Let the lady speak first, and then I'll add whatever's fittin'," subjoined the sailor.

So Grace told her story briefly from the time she left her grandmother's door until she sank fainting on the ground, just after her pursuers, seized with a panic, had made their escape. The Deacon did not speak when his daughter concluded, but he turned to the sailor with a face that his wife and daughter hardly knew, it was so stern.

It was evident the Deacon was bent on having justice

dealt out to these villains. The sailor understood the look and gesture of his host.

"I sail under his Majesty's flag, and I'll be true to the colors I hang out; so I can't be givin' names or tell much of a yarn. But you may rely on't, there was somebody but Britishers on the Long Island side engaged in this foul play; and if you've got an enemy hereabouts that bears you a grudge for any old scores, you'd better keep a sharp eye round for him."

"There's them Jarvyses, father!" interposed Mrs. Palmer, speaking the thought of both the Deacon and Grace.

A gleam of intelligence went over the sailor's features.

"I've my reasons for not tellin' names," he said. "I'd be glad enough to have the villains brought to justice, but you wouldn't be likely to run down all of 'em, and, as I said, I can't turn agin the flag I sail under. All I can say now is, that within the last two weeks I had a chance to learn there was some foul play brewin', and I jest promised myself to keep watch and turn the screw the wrong way if there was a chance when the time came. This mornin' I had my suspicions roused, for I see a young head and an old 'un laid together, and I reckoned they'd sail under sealed orders by night. They put off and I followed 'em, keepin' to wind'ard, and gettin to shore jist after they did, and havin' a good place for eavesdroppin', the whole plan was mapped out before me; and black enough it was. I'd made up my mind to take a comrade into my counsels, but there wasn't many I wanted to trust with this business, and the one I'd counted on was ordered off, so I concluded to trust my own right arm and a good musket."

"Oh, what can we do to pay you!" exclaimed Grace.

"I've had pay enough already," answered the sailor, getting up. "It's time for me to be off, for there might come an idea into one or two heads which wouldn't be altogether pleasant for me if I was out of my quarters at sunrise."

"But you won't leave without letting us know the name of the man to whom we owe so much?"

"No objections to that, sir. My name is John Watson. 'Tisn't of much account in the world, but it was never siled with a mean deed or a dishonest one."

"John Watson—John Watson!" repeated the Deacon, thoughtfully. "It seems to me I've heard that ere name."

"Why, father," interposed Mrs. Palmer again, as she paused midway betwixt the pantry and the table with a pumpkin-pie in one hand and a quadrant of cheese in the other, for she was resolved that the preserver of her child should not leave her roof without some slight demonstration of her gratitude in the shape of an abundant meal, "don't you remember that George Watson used to talk about a young brother, John, of his'n when he was here that last summer afore he took to followin' the seas?"

Before the Deacon could answer, the sailor put his hand to his forehead, and cried out:

"Is your name Deacon Daniel Palmer?"

"That's it," said the old man, his face growing eager with a suspicion and a hope.

"Give us your hand, Deacon Palmer!" cried the sailor, in a voice that, with all its sudden surprise of joy, was not quite steady. And as the two hard hands gripped each other, he continued:

"There isn't a man in the world whom I'd sooner done

a good turn to ! I'm the brother of George Watson, the lad that worked for ye through five harvistin's !"

This "lad" was the one whose testimony lawyer Deming had regarded as so important in the impending trial.

"Where is your brother to be found ?" demanded the Deacon.

"Somewhere under seas so deep that no line will ever sound them," answered the sailor, much affected ; and after a little pause, he continued : "He was took out to sea with the yellow fever, and they buried him somewhere in the Injin ocean. But he al'ays said that you was the best cap'n he ever sailed under ; and I've heerd him declare many a time that he'd stuck by you to the last, if he hadn't been took with a hankerin' for the seas."

"Poor George ! he was a likely, honest lad," subjoined the Deacon, all sense of his own loss swallowed up for the moment in sorrow for the young sailor's untimely fate.

After this there were many questions to be asked and answered. The Deacon had a hope that the young sailor could furnish some evidence for his side at the trial ; but he had never heard the conversation betwixt his grandfather and his brother which the latter had related to John Deming. But he listened with intense interest to the Deacon's story, and in the early part of it interrupted him abruptly with :

"Has this old scoundrel got a son ?"

"Yes ; a tall, well-favored young man of about twenty-seven. His name is Richard Jarvys."

The sailor slapped his hand on his knee and gave a long significant whistle. He said nothing. There was no need he should.

"If George was alive, he'd set sail from the farthest

corner of the earth to get the claws of this old rascal off your place," was the sailor's comment when his host concluded. "But he's where his word can't be of avail now; and though we sail under different flags, you'd have mine as free as his'n if it would be of service to you."

"Thank you again, my friend. How is it that you, born in America, have entered his Majesty's service?"

"My mother was an Englishwoman, sir, and her brother sailed for twenty-five years in a British man-of-war. I went with him in his last voyage, and I've sailed under the British flag ever since."

"Well, my friend, I won't quarrel with a man who's done me the service you have this night, because he differs from me in opinion."

And then Mrs. Palmer insisted that the sailor should not leave until he had partaken of the abundant repast she had in the last hour spread on the table. During the hurried meal the Deacon asked his guest if there was any probability that his daughter would be subjected to farther persecutions from the same source.

"Forewarned is forearmed," was the laconic rejoinder. "However, you won't have much to fear from one of the parties, as he's ordered off to New York this week; and for enemies at home, you can set a watch at the lights."

When his guest rose to depart, the Deacon slipped a purse into his hand, but the man dropped down the hard silver on the table in a very decided way.

"Deacon Palmer," he said, "I owed you all I've done this night for the kindness you once showed to poor George."

"Well, if you won't take father's gift, you won't refuse mine!" said Grace, and she pressed into his hand a large

gold anchor with a quaint tracery of leaves, which had belonged to her mother's father.

The sailor received this with manifest pleasure.

"You look as though you needed a good night's sleep to take the fright quite out of you," he said, looking in her white face.

And he left the dwelling with the prayers and blessings of its grateful inmates on his head. Mr. and Mrs. Palmer did not retire that night, late as it was, until they had talked over the matter of Grace's attempted abduction, and they were well satisfied who was one of the abettors, if not instigators of the plot.

There was no use, however, of making any public accusations, as nothing could be proven; but the Deacon concluded that he would set a couple of watch dogs to guard his house at night, and have a couple of men sleep under his roof with muskets loaded in case of an attack.

The next morning the joyful tidings of the surrender of Burgoyne's army sounded its mighty tocsin of triumph through the land. It was the greatest blow that had yet been struck for freedom; that mighty army, composed of the veteran soldiers of Europe, had at last laid down its arms before the yeomanry and militia whom they had treated with every mark of scorn and contempt.

It was a proud day for the young land of America, and her people held jubilee in their pleasant homes and under their waving orchard-trees that autumn.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was midwinter again, and the path of our story leads now through the darkest night that ever settled down on the army of the Revolution, or gathered its blackness without light of moon or stars about its beloved Commander, George Washington.

Sung in sweet song, as it has been; told in stirring story, as it must be while time shall last; the sublime heroism and endurance of this man and his soldiers during the winter at Valley Forge transcend all power of lip or pen. We, the rightful heirs of that glorious inheritance our fathers bought for us with such a price of suffering, read in our fair and stately homes of those bitter, bitter days and nights—of those half-naked, starving, freezing, dying men—and wonder that any love of country or any exalted spirit of sacrifice could have induced them to remain through that awful winter at Valley Forge.

Most wonderful, too, is the power of that grave, calm, silent man, over his army, that it held to him with such loyal faith and love through all that time of intrigue, and jealousy, and base calumny, by which those in high places sought to ruin him.

With a large party in Congress plotting his destruction, with calumnies industriously inculcated to weaken the nation's hope and faith in him; his motives impugned and his military course condemned; with neither money, nor

food, nor clothing for his army; not daring to let the country know the weakness of that army, because the enemy would thus obtain knowledge of it which must result in its speedy destruction—George Washington shines down on us as an example of grand heroism, and patience, and self-sacrifice, to which all ages and all history must do reverence.

It was midwinter again, and Mrs. Palmer set a fresh forestick to a pyramid whose foundation was laid on her brass andirons, and then went to the stairs and called, in that slight note of irritation which is certain to creep into the voice of the most amiable of housekeepers when there is a little jar in the domestic machinery :

“Grace! Grace! Won’t you come here?”

“Yes, mother.” The brave, sweet voice was a pleasant thing to hear.

And a pleasant thing to see was Grace Palmer, as she came down stairs a moment later, with a spray of green leaves and partridge berries in her smooth bands of hair, just a pretty suggestion of summer, and seeming to a fine instinct a type of the delicacy and grace of its wearer.

“Grace,” said her mother, “I’ve got more on my hands than I can carry this afternoon.”

“Anything new, mother,” her voice promising aid and sympathy.

“Well, that yeast hasn’t turned out as I expected, and I’m half afraid to set the cake a risin’ with it, and there’s twenty pound o’ candles to dip; I want you to twist the wicks if you ain’t busy about anything but studyin’.”

“That was all, mother; my books can wait for another time,” taking the candle-rods and the ball of wick from the table on which her mother had just placed them,

and setting herself down diligently to work before the fire.

"Grace," continued her mother, brushing away a small sifting of ashes from a corner of the hearth, "I can't see for my part what in the world you can find to study any longer. Seems to me your head must be stock full by this time. I declare it makes mine ache to think of bein' such a 'knowledge box.'"

A low, amused laugh trickled out of Grace's lips at her mother's comments.

"I shall have to know a great deal more than I do now before my head troubles me on account of any pressure of knowledge," she said.

"Wall, maybe you're in the right on't; but it does sort of seem wastin' time that might be put to good use piecin' bedquilts. It oughtn't to be expected that women should be eddicated like parsons and lawyers, and in my day it was thought enough to have a girl take two or three quarters in writing and 'rithmetic, after she'd got through the Bible and spellin' book."

"But, mother," commenced Grace, and then she paused.

"Yes, I know," answered Mrs. Palmer, with a little maternal vanity, "Major Dudley expects to make a lady of you; and if I say it, that shouldn't, Grace, he won't have much to do there; and I don't mean to set my face against this studyin'; only in my day it would have been considered a dreadful waste of time—*dreadful!*"

We have no doubt that Grace would have been able to defend her own side with force and logic; but at that moment there was a knock at the door—one of those kind that have business and authority in their very sound.

Mrs. Palmer opened it. A couple of men stood there,

who informed her that they were two of a number of Commissioners appointed by Congress to go through the States and collect whatever they could from the inhabitants for the relief of the army at Valley Forge.

The appeal was one that met a quick response in the hearts of both mother and daughter. Mrs. Palmer invited the men in at once, and inquired what was needed most. She was willing to give anything she had.

"Everything's needed most, ma'am," said the smaller of the two men—a voluble, active, available sort of person, who probably had been selected for his present mission on account of these very qualities. "We want straw for our soldiers to sleep on, and blankets to cover 'em, and shoes and stockings for their feet, and clothes for their backs.

"We want linen and medicine for our wounded, and beef, and pork, and vegetables, and flour, for the men that have left their homes and given their lives for our country, and that are starving and freezing to death at Valley Forge."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Palmer, "is it so bad as that?"

"It's worse than that, ma'am," continued the voluble little man; "they've exhausted the country for miles around, and there isn't anything to be had for man or beast. I've seen sights to make a strong man cry like a child when I was at camp. I've seen our brave fellows shiverin' and bleedin' in this bitter cold, without a mouthful to eat, and markin' every step they took in the snow with their blood. I've seen them lie dyin' on the frozen ground, without so much as a bit of straw for their pillow——"

"Oh, don't! I can't hear any more!" broke in Grace's voice here; and she burst into tears.

The Commissioner saw he had stirred up the right spirit here, and only stayed to inform Mrs. Palmer that he should call before ten the next morning for any donations she might have ready; then hurried off with his companion.

Mrs. Palmer did not dip her candles or set her cake to rising that afternoon; but she and Grace had a time of great bustle and activity hunting up stores of old linen, despoiling old oak chests of their treasures of blankets and quilts, and adding to these as many pairs of stockings as could possibly be spared from the general need.

"Here's a couple more of pairs that I footed up for your father last fall, Grace," said Mrs. Palmer, as she added them to the dark blue pile in the corner. "There's no use of your bringin' for'ard any of yours, for they couldn't get 'em on, but father and I can get through the winter on what's left with careful darnin', and there'll be time enough to spin yarn and knit up a fresh batch afore another winter sets in. I'll set a patch on the knee o' them blue trowsers of your father's that he'd thrown by, and put another on the sleeve of that old cinnamon-colored coat; and if they don't look very scrumptious, they'll keep one jest as warm. I declare, Grace, I feel as if we'd no right to go to our warm feather beds nights while them brave, sufferin' men haven't got anything better than the frozen ground to lie down on."

"And they're doing it for *us*, mother." Then her thought took a sudden leap; "I can't be thankful enough that Robert has been detained under General Putnam this winter on the Hudson, instead of undergoing these miseries in the camp at Valley Forge. Poor boy! he never could have stood it!"

"I know it; but, Grace, other mothers has got boys there!" Mrs. Palmer's voice was low for pity.

"And other sisters brothers!" added Grace, and the thought gave her pity a fresh stimulus as she hurried from the room in quest of whatever could possibly be spared from the family stores.

The short winter day had gone down in a night of bitter cold. Deacon Palmer had returned home early, and had just added a couple of smoked beeves to a large pile of varied provisions on the table, and was preparing to bestow these in a barrel close at hand, when the kitchen door was suddenly burst open, and the next moment Mrs. Comfort Palmer came right into the kitchen, drawing her breath painfully, and evidently too much exhausted to speak. The old woman had not left her house for years in the winter. They could hardly have been more amazed had one from the dead entered the room. Grace cried out first:

"Grandma, what does this mean?" and she hurried to the old woman's side and took her cold, withered hands in her soft, warm ones.

They brought her to the blazing fire.

"It can't be that she's walked from her house over here, this day!" said Mrs. Palmer to her husband, while Grace untied her grandmother's bonnet.

"Yes, I have; every step," panted the old woman.

Each looked at the other aghast, wondering she had not dropped dead on the snow-covered road. But before they could speak again, Mrs. Palmer found her voice, and cried out loud, and with a strange, eager triumph:

"I've found it, Daniel; I've found it!"

"Found what, mother?" peering into her face, and fearing that his mother had lost her reason.

"*The bill of sale.* It's your'n now and your children's; and Ralph Jarvys can't get it from you!"

The old woman fumbled in her pocket and brought forth an old yellow document. Her hearers stood round her pale and silent. She gave the paper into her son's hands.

"There it is!" she said, "signed and sealed!"

The Deacon went to the light without speaking one word. The eyes of his wife and daughter followed him out of white faces. He opened the paper and read it every word before he spoke. Then he looked up:

"It's the bill of sale," he said, simply; "and there's no disputing it. The homestead's mine now, and no man can take it from me."

They were not a demonstrative people, not much given to the outward indulgence of emotion of any sort; but this sudden lifting of the weight which had lain for years on their souls was more than they could bear; father, mother, and daughter sat down and burst into tears, and for a while not a word was uttered. At last the Deacon's voice thanked God for the good fortune which He had sent them.

"Why, Daniel, it seems as though it couldn't be true, it's *so* good!" said Mrs. Palmer, laughing and crying together.

"That's the way I felt when I first came across it," interposed the old woman. "You see, after the Commissioners called to-day, to get me to hunt up whatever I'd got to give to the army, I sot a while thinkin', and finally I concluded I'd go up stairs and ransack the old sea-chest that was full o' blankets my mother gave me, spun and wove by her own hands afore I was married.

"I'd never had any use for the blankets, and I'd sot

a good deal of store on 'em for Grace, because they was her great-grandmother's make, but I thought they could never be put to better service than keepin' the men warm who was fightin' for our country. So I went up garret and was a rummagin' down to the bottom of the old chest, when I suddenly knocked somethin' aside, and I see there was a false bottom in the old chest, and there was a paper in one corner folded carefully, and I took it up and opened it; and as soon as I see the names of David Palmer and Samuel Jarvys signed to it, the light flashed right into my mind, and I felt it was the Lord's doin's; and that it was His blessed will that my eyes should live to see the words that put Daniel out of the clutches of them that had plotted his ruin."

"But why didn't you wait to send for father instead of coming out such a night, grandma?" asked Grace.

The old woman's face kindled.

"It put the fire o' my youth in my veins, seein' that ere, Grace. I couldn't sleep to-night till I'd seen it safe and sound in your father's hands; and if the distance had been twice as far, and the weather twice as cold, I shouldn't a minded it then."

"But how in the world, mother, did it get in the bottom of that ere trunk?" inquired the Deacon.

"It all came to me afore I got down from the garret. That old sea-chest was one that belonged to your grand'ther, Daniel; and a few days afore he was taken sick he'd brought it down stairs and rummaged it over, for it was filled with a good many curi's things he'd brought from forei'n lands, for he followed the seas when he was a young man; and he must have slipped the paper into the chest the night after he bought the land, thinking he'd

have it handy ; and I remember jest where the chest stood at the foot of his bed ; and after he was gone, I concluded it would be jest the thing to hold the blankets and comforts mother'd given me, and stowed it stock full and had it carried up garret, where it stood until this day."

Of the happy and grateful hearts gathered around the supper table ; of the long, pleasant evening which followed, when they sat around the wide old fireplace and looked into each other's eyes for sympathy in the good fortune that had come in so strange and unexpected a way ; of all this, dear reader, your fancies can make fairer pictures than my pen can.

"You and I will lay down here at last, Patience," said the Deacon, almost gaily, to his wife.

"Don't talk of dying here, father ; talk of *living* !" and Grace's soft hand slipped into her father's.

But before that evening closed old Mrs. Palmer, who had been refreshed with wine and cordials, was seized with severe shiverings from head to foot. The next day she was unable to leave her bed. The long walk that bitter day proved too much for the infirm old woman. She lingered for several weeks "waiting patiently," but she never rallied again, never left the roof to restore which to her son she had paid her life ; and before the birds of another spring sang their promise of the summer she heard God call her, and in the cool of the evening she was not afraid.

Deacon Palmer of course made no further effort to have the impending trial delayed, and it came up at the next session of the county court, which occurred in May. Both the Jarvyses had little doubt but they should gain the case at law although they knew they had little sympathy

in the community. Great, however, was the consternation of the old man and his counsel when the bill of sale was produced. It was of no use to question its authenticity, for there was plenty of evidence to place that beyond a doubt, and the decision was rendered in favor of Deacon Palmer.

During that year suspicions that the younger Jarvys was engaged in a surreptitious trade with the British on the Long Island shore were set afloat, and the young man became so obnoxious to the inhabitants, that fears for his personal safety induced him to leave in a vessel bound for the East Indies. Grace never saw him again, although neither she nor her family entertained the smallest doubt of his participation in the nefarious plot to abduct her the night of her return from her grandmother's. But henceforth the shadow of Richard Jarvys or his father's will not darken the path of our story.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IT was the midsummer of seventeen hundred and seventy-nine—that summer so fraught with dread and disaster to the peaceful towns clustered along the Connecticut shore.

Early in July, Sir Henry Clinton had appointed Governor Tryon to the command of a marauding expedition along the seaboard of Connecticut, with the object of drawing Washington from his mountain fastnesses on the Hudson; and this expedition was conducted in such a spirit of wanton brutality, and disgraced with the perpetration of such atrocities on the part of Tryon and his soldiers, that their very names were execrated throughout the land.

New Haven had been captured and its public stores destroyed, while the pleasant town of Fairfield had been laid desolate, and its inhabitants had seen their homes making the midnight a sheet of flame. Norwalk had been invaded and much of it laid in ashes; and the inhabitants of New London now awaited in trembling anxiety the descent of the expedition on their shores.

The homeless inhabitants of the desolated towns wandered along the seaboard and told the fearful story of their homes ravaged and laid in ashes by the fierce and brutal soldiery, of plunder and rapine and devastation, arousing the people everywhere into fierce indignation at their wrongs. And the robins sang sweetly in the summer mornings, and the golden banners of sunshine waved over

the fields which grew ripe for the harvest, while over the land hung that awful shadow of terror and waiting.*

And in one of these days on which our story has fallen, a still, sultry afternoon of midsummer, Lucy Trueman came down stairs with the spy-glass in her hand.

"Have you been up to the top of the house, Lucy?" asked her mother, coming out from the bedroom in a black satin skirt and white linen "short-gown," after the fashion of matrons of that time.

"Yes, but there isn't any sign of a fleet on the Sound; only a few schooners and fishing smacks, and two or three merchant vessels."

"I hope the Lord will send a wind that'll scatter the ships of our enemies as he scattered the hosts of Pharaoh if they ever show themselves off our coast," said Mrs. Trueman, slipping a skein of yarn around the back of one chair and bestowing her plethoric self in another.

As for Lucy, she looked as though climbing to the top of the house had over-exerted her, for the roses blazed wide in her fair cheeks, and she sat down by the window and fanned herself vigorously with a large fan of turkey feathers which lay on the table.

"I've sent by John Hemingway for Cousin Tabitha and the children to come over here, and put up until they can find a better home," continued Mrs. Trueman. "To think of her husband's bein' sick off in camp, and she and the three little ones havin' the house burnt over their heads!"

"It's enough to make one's blood boil!" said Lucy,

* In one of these marauds, a great-great-aunt of the writer having fled for safety to the woods, had a quantity of linen cut from the loom and gashed through and through for mere wantonness by the swords of the soldiers; while one of her neighbors—a deaf old gentleman—failing to answer some questions which he did not understand, had his tongue cut out.

using her fan with greater energy, while the damask roses flamed broader for indignation in her cheeks.

"And to think of her goin' down on her knees to the British officer who ordered the house to be fired, and beggin' him to spare it because she was a lone, helpless woman with three little children."

"And didn't *that* soften him, mother?"

"Soften him, child! He swore fiercely at her, and said he was glad of any chance to burn the spawn of a Yankee out of house and home, and gave her only half an hour to get the children and what little clothing they could carry out of the house."

Lucy shuddered with a mingling of pity and horror at this story.

"We shall know what to expect when the British fleet comes."

"Yes, they won't be likely to show much quarter. And there's Nathaniel; he'll be sartin to march off with the front of the militia, and no holdin' him back."

"I don't believe you'd try to, mother, in that case. Why, woman as I am, I believe I'd take grandpa's musket and start off myself!" and the pretty face fired up until the roses were all lost in a general glow.

Mrs. Trueman was a very courageous woman, but her mother heart made her a coward in all which concerned the safety of her boy. She sighed, and the ball in her hands expanded rapidly, fed by the small tributary of yarn which flowed from the chair to Mrs. Trueman's fingers.

"Mother," said Lucy, suddenly breaking the silence, "seems to me you're fixed up!"

"Wall, I thought I'd take my knittin' and run over to Miss Palmer's, and have a talk with her. In these dark

times neighbors can kinder chirk one another up. Hadn't you better lock the house up and come too, Lucy?"

Lucy meditated a moment, and then shook her head.

"I promised Nathaniel I'd go with him when he got through haying, to shake the black-heart cherry-tree."

The ball was completed now. Mrs. Trueman rose up, took a black ribbon from her neck, to which was suspended a bunch of keys, and laid them on the table by her daughter.

"I'll leave 'em in your charge," said the thoughtful housekeeper. "You may have some use for 'em afore I get back."

The sight of those keys must have supplied some subtle link of association in Lucy's mind, although she was probably unconscious of this, as she said, suddenly:

"Mother, I didn't like the looks of those two men who were here to tea night before last. The more I think of it the more I'm convinced they were British sailors from the squadron that's anchored off Long Island, and their lurking around here could have been for no good purpose."

"Likely enough they were spies," answered her mother. "I didn't think anything about it at the time, for I was busy talking with old Squire Peckham that I haven't seen for well-nigh upon twenty years, and he was a friend of my father's."

"Well, you didn't talk for his benefit alone; for the door was open, and while you were telling the Squire about the silver set uncle sent me, I happened to come into the dining-room, and the men sat at the table, their heads bent forward, drinking in greedily every word you said; and there was an expression on both faces which I cannot describe, but it was made up of cunning and malice—an

expression so evil that no honest man's face could ever wear it."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Trueman, tying her bonnet. "One has to keep eyes and ears open such times as this!" with which comprehensive remark she proceeded to walk out of the front door.

She had not, however, progressed far beyond the gate before she returned, saying:

"Lucy, if you feel kind o' skeerish about bein' left here all alone, jest say the word and I'll stay at home."

"Not the least bit, mother. Nobody's goin' to run the risk of comin' round here in broad daylight; and I shan't have anything worse to fear than my own shadow."

And thus reassured, Mrs. Trueman started off the second time, and Lucy went into her mother's room and arranged her hair before the small mahogany framed mirror, and smiled softly to herself at the pretty reflection there, and then sighed; for a thought which came after and went far away—a thought which carried on its wings the tenderness, the self-sacrifice, the long endurance of a true woman's heart.

The last two years had wrought a subtle change in Lucy Trueman. She was still bright, amusing, impulsive, full of pretty, sudden speech and ways; but something of her merry, careless girlhood had gone, and it was supplanted by a new dignity and refinement of manner.

She had not "sunk her life in the life of another;" her heart had not carried its burden of hope, and fear, and anxiety for two years without strengthening and developing her character; and, standing before the mirror humming fragments of old psalms, or some merry tune breaking in a sudden sparkle of song out of her red lips, and flashing

its spray of melody into the silence, Lucy Trueman looked, and yet was not quite the same Lucy Trueman she had been two years before.

The rest of the dressing was a very simple matter, and when she came out of the bedroom in her light gingham dress, with her round bare arms, she made a prettier picture than one often sees. She had just taken from the upper bureau drawer a breast-knot of blue ribbon, when a slight sound struck her—like the cracking of old boards when stealthy feet move across them.

It came from the back hall of the old tavern, and was precisely that sound which at midnight, or in any lonely place, thrills one's nerves with a sudden mysterious fear. But it was broad daylight now; and Lucy smiled to herself when she found her heart was beating faster. But there came the sound again, and this time it was louder and nearer; there was no mistaking it now. Some instinct of self-defence made her glance towards the table on which lay her brother's pocket-knife, but she was too late; the door was burst swiftly although noiselessly open, and there stood before Lucy Trueman's horrified eyes the men who had taken supper at the tavern two days before, and who had haunted her ever since with a vague dread.

The men seemed for the moment dismayed at the sight of the girl; their object was plunder and not harm to any inmates of the tavern, although their physiognomies showed them to be desperate men, who would not hesitate at any deed of violence or wrong if it interfered with the consummation of their plans.

Lucy stood nailed to the floor, but a shriek from her white lips curdled the air with its horror. The men recovered from their first alarm before it was silenced.

They were tolerably certain she was alone in the house, and everything with them depended upon dispatch. They threw off all disguises at once. The ruffians advanced towards her, and one pointed his musket while the other seized her roughly about the waist.

"You are a dead girl," said the latter, with a horrible oath, "if you screech again;" and then he pushed her down, half-frozen as she was with fear, into a chair.

"We haven't any time to waste on words," said both the men. "What we do must be done quick. Your life is in our hands, and if you want to save it you'll do what we demand, and get rid of us."

"What is it you want of me?" staring piteously from one dark face to another.

They were both heavy, muscular men, in whose features all brutal passions, all base and evil tendencies had set their signs.

"We come here to get that set of silver that's somewhere in this house, and we'll have it afore we leave it; and you've got to tell us where it is, or you'll never live to tell anything again!" and then came another oath, which both men repeated.

"And if I'll tell you, will you promise not to harm me?" supplicated the trembling creature.

"We don't want to hurt you, but the silver; we'll have that, or you'll be worse off."

Lucy pointed to the cluster of keys on the table; and with her limbs shaking as her voice did, made answer, for she was young and life was sweet:

"The smallest key there will unlock the white chest in one corner of the room overhead, and in the chest you'll find the hair-cloth trunk that holds the silver."

Lucy remembered that the men held a short consultation together about the best method of disposing of her while they went up stairs in search of the silver; one of the two insisting that she would be sure to make off if they left her alone. It ended by one of the robbers taking a strong leathern strap from his pocket and confining her to the chair.

After this she could remember very little. She sat in the chair with all her faculties benumbed with terror, for what seemed to her, as she afterwards recalled the event, slow hours, although it was subsequently proved that the time of the men's absence could not have exceeded five minutes. On the men's return another brief consultation passed betwixt them of which she was the object.

"We'd better take all the game we can find," said one of the ruffians. "The jade'll set up such a yellin' as soon as we are gone that she'll be sure to get somebody foul of our track. We'd better carry her off, too."

And the other villain swore with an oath that he was ready, and they hastily unpinioned the half-conscious girl. She remembered saying to them, as one in a dream, that they had promised to leave her, and both the wretches laughed out brutally, and said that his Majesty's soldiers never felt themselves bound by oaths to Yankees and rebels, and afterwards she could remember no more—no more until she found herself on the road which led from her house to the sea-shore. The Old Mill Tavern stood quite by itself on the old turnpike road, which was now little travelled, about a mile from the Sound.

The air must have revived the girl, for her captors had not proceeded more than a quarter of a mile when she opened her eyes and found herself being dragged hastily

along the sandy road. The men had not even paused to gag her, feeling that they were on dangerous ground, and no doubt trusting that she would not regain her consciousness until she was beyond the reach of help. But as she opened her eyes the whole awful truth flashed swiftly across the soul of Lucy Trueman; and her face being turned to the right, for one of the captor's arms was around her waist, she caught sight of Nathaniel in a distant field raking the hay together in the pleasant afternoon sunshine.

"Nathaniel!" It was a shriek of imploring terror, such as a woman might make in her last need, and it curdled the still air, and sent its wild horror among the echoes of the distant rocks, and they cried in affright to each other:

"Shoot the jade quick!" cried one of the alarmed captors.

"Somebody'll hear the report," answered the other, and he clapped his heavy hand on her mouth.

But the wild horror working in her brain and heart gave for the moment to Lucy Trueman the strength of more than two men. She dashed aside the heavy hand of one, the arms of the other:

"Nathaniel!"

The wild shriek thrilled the echoes with its agony once more. But he is far off and he does not hear; his back is turned, and he works on in the joyful summer sunshine. She writhes herself once more from the strong arms:

"Nathaniel!"

Oh, summer winds, rise up into mighty trumpets and bear across the meadows to his ears that cry, for it is his

sister's last ; the strong arms triumph now ; they grasp the girl, they gag her ; Lucy Trueman knows no more.

But Nathaniel suddenly starts and stands erect and listens. A far-off cry of distress reaches him ; the rake falls from his hands ; he turns and looks off to the east, whence the sound seems to come. A moment more and a bend in the road would have hidden all from his view, but that moment saves it ; he sees the close of the short struggle betwixt his sister and her captors ; his face grows white as hers ; his great, brown eyes blaze fire ; in one moment he comprehends it all.

Nathaniel Trueman had been out hunting that morning, and his gun lay under a tree close at hand. He seized this, and bent his slight, lithe limbs towards the sea-shore ; for he divined at once that the men would make for this. Nathaniel was fleet-footed as an Indian, but the race was now to save his sister, and he prayed that God would lend new speed to his feet as he panted across the hills ; and he did not hear his loud heart, and it seemed to him that he moved like a snail.

The road which Nathaniel took led across the hills through a district of woods to the rocks by the sea. The men had hurried rapidly along with their burden, but, of course, the unconscious weight somewhat retarded their speed, and Nathaniel Trueman emerged from the woods upon the low, grey rocks just as the men came out from the turnpike on the sandy road which led to the sea-shore. The youth's heart sickened for a moment as he saw the delicate form of his sister in their grasp. He raised his musket and then lowered it again. If he took aim at those men it would be almost certain death to his sister.

For a moment the youth deliberated. Better die him-

self; better, far better see his fair young sister lie dead at his feet than be borne off by such fiends as those who now held her.

"God help me!" said Nathaniel Trueman. And he did not say it with a feeling of vague helplessness and weakness, which all men have in some great crisis of need and terror. "God help me!" said Nathaniel Trueman, feeling that He was a present God, strong to save in any moment of human limitation and need.

Then he lifted his musket and took deliberate aim, and his voice rang clear and incisive over the cliffs, and reached the men that were hurrying their burden to the sand:

"Move another step with that girl and I'll shoot you dead on the spot!"

A villain is usually a coward when suddenly surprised. The ruffians knew they were in an enemy's country, and that they ran great risks of discovery; and the attitude of Nathaniel, as he stood on the edge of the grey cliff, the slight, graceful form cut out like a statue against the rocks in its stern defiance, had something about it which appalled the men whom he addressed.

They stood still and took hurried counsel with each other. They had muskets and could fire, too; but there was a house on the left (they did not know it was an unoccupied one), and the sound of a gun might precipitate discovery. Moreover, Nathaniel had the advantage of time; his gun was levelled, and he would probably fire before they could take aim.

Their boat still lay some distance off, and if they could make their escape with their booty it was hardly worth while to run such imminent risks of discovery for the sake

of the girl. All this flashed through their minds in less than a quarter of a minute, and they read it in each other's faces.

Still they had one advantage over Nathaniel. It was for the sake of his sister that he did not fire. The men saw this, and standing still and placing before them the unconscious girl, they cried out:

"If we leave her here, will you pledge your honor not to fire?"

"I pledge it." The voice of Nathaniel coming clear over the cliff was its own witness of veracity.

And the men believed it. They laid poor Lucy Trueman down on the ground where heavy wagon wheels had made deep ruts in the soil; but with a brutality which it sickens us to think of, one of the men, standing in such a manner that Nathaniel from that distance was unable to see his rapid movement, tore down through the small cars of Lucy Trueman the antique jewels which blazed there,* and then started for the shore, having plundered her of every gift which, four years before, her uncle had taken so much pride and pains in bringing her from Europe.

Nathaniel had lowered his gun, but he watched the men breathlessly, ready to raise it any moment, for there was a strong possibility that they might alter their minds and turn suddenly and fire on him. But the risks probably seemed too great; they made rapidly for the boat, and were soon concealed by the distant rocks.

Nathaniel lost no time in hurrying to his sister; but as he reached her and saw her fair white face lying as dead faces lie on the hard ground, with the blood dripping

* This outrage was actually committed by a British soldier on a lady during the war.

from the deep gashes in the mutilated ears where the carbuncles had lately flashed their royal radiance, a cold terror came over him, and his knees smote under him so he could not stand.

"Lucy, pretty sister," said the youth, bursting into tears. And, falling down by her side, he stroked the face which he had not strength to raise from its rough pillow.

For awhile the fear that she might have died of fright fairly suffocated Nathaniel Trueman; but at last, with a great shudder, Lucy opened her eyes and glared at him.

"Lucy, you know who I am; don't be frightened any more; you're all safe," said the familiar, soothing voice of Nathaniel.

Her face struggled with perplexity and terror a moment; then the whole truth flashed over her. She stared on all sides, shaking with horror. Nathaniel lifted her head and laid it on his shoulder with words like a mother's to her frightened infant:

"They're all gone, Lucy, dear; you've not a thing more to fear. I heard you when you called me out there in the fields, and the Lord gave me speed and strength to save you."

Poor Lucy! The storm broke then in sobs and shudders; in wild clinging to her brother, and in spasms of terror that every little while went over her, and that Nathaniel could not soothe.

But she was quieted at last, and then she put her hand to her ears and asked:

"What have they done to my head, it aches so?"

"The brutes must have torn out your ear-rings. My poor sister! I should hardly know you."

It was pitiful, the way she sat there and looked him in

the face—bright, pretty Lucy Trueman, with the slow tears oozing down her cheeks. The shock she had undergone came well-nigh depriving her of reason.

But at last Nathaniel succeeded in arousing her, and in partly carrying and partly leading her home. They were not more than a mile from this; but Lucy was haunted by a continual dread that the men would return and snatch her away from Nathaniel; and they were such desperate villains, and the road was so lonely a one, that the young captain was not wholly without solicitude, and kept watch on all sides, although he was careful to conceal his fears from his sister.

He drew out of her by degrees a recital of all the circumstances of the robbers' visit, and dispatched a small boy, who was the first individual they met before he reached the tavern, for his mother and Mrs. Palmer.

The story which the frightened child carried to the Deacon's of Lucy's appearance brought back the two ladies and Grace in an incredibly short space of time, when they found Lucy in Nathaniel's arms, and he was rocking her back and forth in his mother's arm-chair.

It did not take the young man long to relate to the horrified women all which had happened during Mrs. Trueman's absence. Lucy was too exhausted to say much; but the old, familiar, pitying faces and voices went far in quieting and restoring her. But she did not leave her room for nearly two weeks after her narrow escape, and her nervous system underwent a shock at that time whose effects she felt to her dying day.

CHAPTER XIX.

THERE was joy in the homestead of the Palmers in those blazing midsummer days, for Robert had come home, after an absence of two years. Not as he went came back Robert Palmer. The young soldier had been promoted to a lieutenancy, and those two years had wrought great changes in him. "All for the better," his family thought; especially his mother, who could hardly believe the tall, muscular, sun-browned soldier was the boy that two summers before had started off, full of military enthusiasm and dreams of glory, to join the army of Gates on the Hudson.

Robert had had experience to cool that first boyish enthusiasm for military life, as what soldier of the Revolution did not? But it had condensed into that sturdy patriotism which made the yeomanry of New England the "backbone of the war."

Robert Palmer was a frank, generous, outspoken character. It was not of the fine quality; but it was of that sturdy, muscular kind which laid the foundation of New England's prosperity in the days of our fathers.

He had a keen relish for a joke, and was one of those sparkling, good-humored characters that are a favorite with everybody.

His coming quite revolutionized the quiet life at the Deacon's, with his stories of feats of daring, of heroism

and endurance, of all kinds of hazard and suffering which give to camp-life its tragical interest, and flashed strange, brilliant colors among the neutral tints of the household.

"Things have reached a terrible pass," laughed Grace on the fourth morning of her brother's return. "You've broken into all our time-honored habits and traditions, for which I hold you responsible. I haven't spun a knot, or sewed a stitch, or churned a quart of milk since your return; and sit up from early morning until late at night, with wide eyes and mouth drinking in your stories, until my conscience begins to accuse me of idleness, which, you know, opens the door to all other sins. Aren't you almost through with your stories?" throwing herself down on the settle by his side, where he was paring an early apple which Benny had just brought him as an especial testimonial of his awe and admiration of his soldier-brother.

"Oh, worthy descendant of a Deacon, I've only just begun."

"Mother, do you hear *that*?" said Grace to her mother, who was cutting off the tops of some young beets. "You haven't set me much of an example of industry since Robert came."

"Well, I'm goin' to try to bestir myself to-day," said Mrs. Palmer, in a tone which bore witness to some small compunction and doubt. "But, somehow, it seems to take all my time to listen to Robert's stories and get up some-*thin'* that'll be a relish for him."

"That's right, mother; I expected you'd kill the fatted calf and provide a continual feast to celebrate the return of your eldest son. Oh, the times that my stomach has hungered for a slice of your apple-pie, and my mouth watered over my salt pork and hard bread for a big doughnut and

a hunk of cheese such as I used to carry to the old brown school-house to eat at recess."

"You dear boy!" said Grace, leaning forward and stroking the young soldier's hair; and her face said a great deal more.

"You dear girl," said Robert, with an answering smile, cutting a quadrant of the apple into her hand.

"I think," said Mrs. Palmer, "that I'll ventur' on having a couple of briled chickens for dinner; the largest on 'em's got big enough to cook."

"Briled chickens!" exclaimed her eldest son; "blessed sound to a soldier's ears! Mother, command me to wring their necks."

"He may have my speckled brown hen; that's grown real big in a week," interposed Benny. And this offer was the largest sacrifice to the shrine of military glory which it was in his power to make.

But Mrs. Palmer would not assent to the decapitation of Benny's grey speckled chicken, and a couple of others were substituted in its stead.

"What are you going to do with yourself to-day, Robert?" asked Grace, as the young soldier came in from the barnyard with the chickens whose life he had just violently dispatched.

"I shall take myself off after you and mother have picked the chickens, for I promised Nathaniel Trueman I'd take a row with him beyond the cove this morning for the sake of old times."

"And mind you go in and chirk up poor Lucy," said Mrs. Palmer. "There's nothin' like cheerful talk for unstrung nerves."

"My little playmate, Lucy! I wish I'd been on hand

when those ruffians showed themselves at the tavern door!" And Robert looked as he had looked on the battle-field now.

And a little later, when Grace walked with him to the gate, past the brier-roses, whose red bowls poured sweet perfume on the air, Robert took a small white box from his pocket.

"Look in there," he said to his sister.

And Grace opened it and saw a small watch-case, daintily embroidered with silk and beads on a blue satin ground. In the centre thereof were a couple of robins alighted on a tumulus of dark-green moss; and in one corner was a spray of leaves and berries, close to which was clustered a name wrought with gold beads—"Bessie."

"How very pretty it is! What lady gave you this, Robert?"

"Not a lady, but a little girl who hadn't seen her thirteenth birthday. It was all she had to give me; and if it hadn't been for her, poor child, the chances are that your brother wouldn't have been standing here by this lilac-bush with you this May morning."

"Wouldn't? What do you mean, Robert?"

"It isn't a long story. You know I wrote you, soon after the battle of Monmouth, that I'd had a touch of the bilious fever. It was a good deal more than that; but I didn't want to scare home-folks, so I put a light face on the matter. We had halted at Paramus, used up with our marches after Sir Henry Clinton, and the weather was hot enough to brile a man's brains——"

"Broil, not brile, Robert, dear."

"Come, Gracie, you mustn't expect much of me in the way of fine talking. I shall be plain homespun Robert

Palmer to the end of the chapter. It'll do for you, who are a scholar yourself and expect to be with one all your life, to talk like a dictionary; but it don't matter if I stick to the old-fashioned words."

Grace might have made a strong point against Robert, but she was interested in his story; moreover, there was one allusion in his remarks which made her cheeks tingle.

"Go on, Robert," she said, thinking this subject might remain open for further discussion.

"Well, I'd tossed about, with a tree for a roof and a blanket for a bed, for two mortal days, parched with thirst and burning with fever, and the third morning I said to myself: 'Robert Palmer, if you've got to give up the ship, do it like a man; stand fast to the wheel until she goes down.' So I staggered up and off into the woods in search of mint or berries—anything that would ease the thirst that gnawed at my stomach and throat, and expected every minute to drop down under the nearest tree and never get up again."

"Oh, Robert, how we should have felt if we had known it!"

"Lucky you didn't. Well, I came at last upon some high-vine blackberries, and they touched the spot, for I hadn't put a mouthful inside for three days; and then I spied some apple-trees not far off, and I knew there must be a house nigh at hand, and I started for the apple-trees; but before I reached 'em I came to a spring with mint growing all about it, and I sank down here, too faint to move a step further.

"I reckon I must have fainted dead away, for I can't remember anything for a long time, and the sun had got well towards the west'ard when I opened my eyes. I tried

to get up, but I couldn't make it out, and I was resigning myself to the worst, when there came over the fields a soft child's voice humming some old psalm-tune. I rested my head on my hand, and a moment later I saw a little girl hopping along the grass to the spring with a tin pail in her hand. Seeing me, she stopped short, her little round face full of surprise and a little alarm.

"'Don't be afraid, my little girl,' I said. 'I'm a sick man, and I've wandered off from the camp, and I shall die here if somebody don't help me.'

"The surprise in her face vanished into pity. She drew near:

"'Are you a tory?' she asked.

"'No. I'm a soldier in the American army. Won't you give me a drink of water?' She took a small tin cup from the pail and filled it from the spring and gave it to me. Oh, Grace, how good that water tasted!"

"Go on, Robert."

"The little girl told me that she and her grandmother lived all alone in the red house beyond the apple-trees. Her brother, Lyman, had joined the British army, but her father had always taken side with the Americans, although he died at the breaking out of the war.

"Then the child hurried off, saying she would bring her grandmother, who knew just how to take care of sick people, and wouldn't let me lie there any longer. In a few moments the child returned with an old woman, wrinkled and bowed down, but she had a pleasant, motherly face for all that. Well, to make the story short, they got me up, and half-led and half-carried me to the house, for I couldn't have stood alone to save my life, and they got me to bed; and I don't remember much after this, only I

know that old woman and that young child nursed me for the next two weeks through a terrible fever, just as tenderly as you and mother would have done it, Gracie!"

"Oh, Robert, how grateful you must be to them!" said Grace, with the bright tears in her eyes.

"Grateful! That isn't strong enough! When I got better at last, it seemed as though that child couldn't do enough for me. She hung round my chair with her pretty prattle, her sweet womanish ways, and her bright rosy face day after day; and I told her stories of you folks at home, and made her all sorts of gimcracks and toys with bits of wood out of my jack-knife, and I was a very happy convalescent; but it came to a sudden end."

"How, Robert?"

"Why, it seems that I was in the hottest kind of tory neighborhood, and it got noised abroad that old *Miss Stebbins* had got a live rebel in her house, and there was a plan laid to seize and take me prisoner. One night, just at sunset, two or three of these fellows, who thought they'd have a nice spree over it, came round to spy out how the land lay, and it happened that Bessie, who was down among the currant bushes, overheard the whole plan. There were about twenty concerned in it—rough, drunken fellows—and betwixt them all I should have had a chance of pretty tough handling.

"Bessie got hold of the whole scheme. They were to come that night about ten o'clock and demand me without loss of time, and, as they swore, carry off the Yankee dead or alive. Bessie hurried back to the house panting with fright, and told me what she had overheard. I was by this time hard on the road to getting well. I'd been out that day for the first time. Well, I saw they would have the

advantage of me in strength and numbers, and my only chance was to make my escape; but it looked like pretty tough work for a man with no stouter legs than mine. But as I'd nothin' else, I concluded to try 'em. Miss Stebbins had gone away to a sick neighbor's, and Bessie concluded to take my advice, lock up the house, and go to her grandmother.

"About three miles off on a lonely road was an old deserted house where I could pass the night, and the next day make my way to a more friendly neighborhood. So little Bessie packed me off with a pocketful of pie and gingerbread and a blanket to lie on; and then—poor child, I can't bear to think of it," said Robert Palmer, stopping short.

"And then?" said Grace, softly.

"She put her arms about my neck, little Bessie Stebbins, and with the tears on her cheeks, thick as blackberries on high vines in August, she sobbed out that this little watch-case she worked for her brother was all she had to give me, and that I mustn't forget her, but keep it, and promise that some day I would come back to see her and grandma. And I promised her, and that is the last I saw of her.

"That night I slept at the old deserted house in a clearing among the woods, and the next day got among friendly strangers, and before another week was out I was safe and sound in camp."

"But the child—are you sure no harm came to her?"

"Oh, yes; she was a brave little puss, bless her! She must have made quick tracks for her grandmother and reached there before dark; but those twenty tories must

have felt blank enough that night when they found the house deserted and the rebel gone."

"It's a real little pearl of a romance," said Grace; "and to make it complete, Robert, you ought to go back one of these days and marry this little Bessie Stebbins!"

"Who knows but I shall! No need of being in a hurry. She's only twelve now," said Robert, with a laugh, and he went his way.

And Grace went up gravely to the house, thinking of this story and all Bessie Stebbins had done for Robert, and passed the rest of the morning talking it over with her mother.

A little after sunset Robert and Grace sauntered home from a walk on the beach, where they had been listening to the cry of the seagulls and watching the white frill of foam on the sands.

"You've got good news, father," said Grace. "I see it in your eyes."

"So I have, praise the Lord!"

"Let's have it." This, of course, was Robert.

"We've recaptured Stony Point! Sir Henry Clinton has recalled his troops from Long Island, and New London is out of danger!"

They all drew a long breath for surprise and joy. The story of the capture of Stony Point, the news of the deliverance of New London, seemed too good to be true. The Deacon's family, like the whole country, was thrilled with amazement at that daring achievement—one of the most brilliant of the war. And then the Deacon had to go over the whole story to listeners that hung on every word—how General Wayne had stolen at midnight upon the sentries that guarded that lone promontory washed by the

Hudson; how bravely he and his men had driven in the pickets and mounted the ramparts with a shout, "The day is ours;" and now, where the British flag had so lately floated in its triumph, there waved another—the Stars and Stripes of America.

"Hearing such a story makes me want to be off to the army again," said Robert Palmer, getting up and pacing the room.

"The whole thing was planned, as every good thing has been in this war, by General Washington. I knew he wasn't lying idle and indifferent, as so many believed, while our coasts were being ravaged, and our homes destroyed. He couldn't break up his army by sending off detachments to hover round every place that was attacked; but this taking Stony Point was a master-stroke, serving two purposes—it's taken the post and called off the enemy from our posts," said the Deacon.

"A master-stroke, sir," said Robert.

"Oh, Grace, I'd like to forgot," said her father, with a lurking pleasure in his smile, "there's something for you!" taking a letter and an oblong roll from his deep coat-pocket.

"Oh, let me see, Gracie!" said Benny, putting up his curly head close to his sister.

And with a face which wore a different eagerness from Benny's, Grace cut the envelope, and there rolled out a silk flag, the new emblem of our new liberties, with its beautifully contrasted bars of white and red, its field of azure blossoming with its thirteen silver stars. Grace had never seen the new banner of her country before. It was a pity that the giver was not there to mark the delight in her face. And in the midst of the general inspection and admiration, Robert said :

"I'll put it up, Grace, at the corner of the house over your window, with appropriate ceremonies to-morrow morning."

And as soon as possible Grace slipped off up stairs with her letter clasped tight in her hand. She did not come down until it was quite dark; but there was a full moon, and the earth lay asleep under its silver frosting.

Mrs. Palmer and Robert had gone over to a neighbor's. The Deacon sat in the door looking out on the night with quiet enjoyment. Grace came up and put her hand softly on her father's shoulder.

"My little daughter!" said the old man, drawing her down on his knee, for every year the tie between Grace and her father seemed to grow closer and tenderer.

"It looks pleasant, the old place in the moonlight, doesn't it?" said Grace.

"Yes, daughter, and it's grown a great deal dearer to me since I can walk over it once more and feel that it's mine, and no man can rob me of it. Maybe the Lord saw that I wasn't grateful enough for the old homestead, and so He let me pass through that long trial of hope, and fear, and dread, which took something out of my life."

"Oh, father, this hope, and fear, and waiting are hard; *very* hard," said Grace, dropping her head on the old man's shoulder, and yielding for once to the long sorrow which oppressed her.

"I know it is, my child. But the Lord always sends us strength to bear our burdens, and you have carried yours bravely."

"But sometimes it grows very heavy, father. Only to think it is more than four years since *he* went away, and there is still no telling when this terrible war will be over."

“As soon as God wills, my daughter, and He has been very merciful to us; the day does not seem very far off to those who now watch in faith and hope.”

He saw her face in the moonlight as she lifted it and smiled on him—a smile that was full of courage and cheer, and that drew its light and sweetness from springs beyond this world. So they sat without speaking awhile, until she heard her mother’s voice and Robert’s at the gate, and then Grace slipped softly up stairs again, and at the close of the letter which she wrote that night, she said :

“It is vain for me to seek for words to tell you, Edward, all that I felt when I looked to-night upon the flag you sent me. I had never seen one, and as I looked on its bars of white and crimson, above all on its blessed cluster of Stars, my thoughts fairly overcame me. ‘Oh, my Stars,’ I said, ‘ye shall shine gloriously. Praise and honor await ye!’ When I think of *that*, Edward—how this little cloud of Stars shall shine bright on the waves of every ocean; how they shall unfurl their sweet faces in every port of the earth, carrying the new sign of peace and liberty and righteousness wherever they go; and when I think that other Stars shall in coming years be added to these, and our home, God willing, shall be built, and our lives move peacefully beneath them; and long after we have lain down to sleep in the hope of a resurrection unto life immortal, they shall shine upon our graves, even as God’s everlasting stars arise over them—when I think of all this, oh my best friend, my lips and my pen have no words to utter the song of joy and praise that is to-night in the heart of your

“GRACE PALMER.”

CHAPTER XX.

WITH the opening of the autumn of seventeen hundred and eighty there came a shock of surprise and dismay to all patriot hearts throughout the land; it was the tidings of the disastrous defeat which our army had sustained under Gates at the battle of Camden.

It seemed almost incredible that the veteran General who had won such laurels a few autumns before, to whom Burgoyne and his haughty troops had laid down their arms on the Hudson, was now utterly routed by an army whose numbers did not equal his own.

Congress and the country began at last to perceive that the Commander-in-Chief was right, as his calm judgment and deep forecast always were in all matters connected with the welfare of his country, when he entreated that an army might be organized at the South instead of leaving its defence to the raw militia within its borders.

Major Dudley had accompanied the reinforcements which had gone South under General Gates; and the tidings of the disastrous battle at Camden had sent a shiver of dread to every heart under the Deacon's roof; but there was one to whom it was more than this—a silent, abiding anguish.

Yet Grace Palmer struggled with it bravely. She moved about diligent as ever in all housewifely duties, and more thoughtful for others than herself; and none would have suspected the slow pain which she carried had it

not been for the unbent lines of the mouth, giving it the look of a grieved child's, and the thin cheeks out of which the faint roses had vanished.

The Deacon and his wife did not often touch with words on this sorrow which had fallen on their child; they showed their sympathy in the thousand nameless ways that love can—in watchfulness, in soft tones, and solicitous ways; and so they all waited in fear and hope for the next tidings that should come from the South.

“Ain't you stickin' down in the house most too tight, Grace?” said Mrs. Palmer, suddenly entering her daughter's room one afternoon in the middle of September, and finding her seated by the window with her book lying in her lap and her eyes looking off to the distant Sound where the sails of the sloops and schooners were flashing to and fro like white clouds driven of the wind.

Grace understood the solicitude which prompted the question, and she turned with a smile—not her old, beaming one, that was so joyous a thing to see; *this* had in it some new element of patience and pain.

“I don't know, mother,” said the girl; “I don't feel much like going out;” and the same patient pain was in her voice which had been a moment before in her smile.

“Wall, father and I was talking about it after dinner; he thinks you don't take the air enough. I think it would chirk you up to go over and see Selina Williams and her mother. They're lively sort o' folks, and I want to get the pattern of Isaac's meetin' coat for Benny.”

“Oh, mother, I can't!” answered Grace, in such a hopeless kind of voice that it went straight to her mother's heart.

“Grace,” she said, placing her hard, thin hand on her

daughter's, "come, chirk up; there's a good girl! Things 'll all come out bright, I guess."

Grace looked up suddenly, but the grateful glance was checked by the rush of tears in her eyes: "You're a good mother," she said, simply speaking her uppermost thought.

"I wish it was in my power to be a better one," and the tears were bright in the mother's eyes too; "but you know, Grace, I'd do anything in the world to save you from this anxiety that I see plain enough's wearin' on your life."

"I know you would, you and father, too. Oh, mother, if God didn't help me, I couldn't bear it!" She broke down here suddenly, and sobs and tears shook her as a storm of wind and rain shakes the trees in midsummer.

Mrs. Palmer put her arms around her child and comforted her as nobody but a mother can. There was not perhaps so much in what she said, for Grace knew perfectly well all her grounds of hope and fear; but there was something in the way of saying it which went straight to the daughter's heart; and Grace looked up at last with a smile shining through her tears.

And when she had grown calmer, Mrs. Palmer reverted again to her walk, for she felt that change of scene, however slight, was what Grace needed more than anything else. "I wish you'd take down a bowl of gooseberry jam and a bottle of currant wine to old *Miss* Ritter that lives in the lane, jest on the right of the old turnpike. You know she's all alone, Grace, and kind o' poorly this summer, and her grandson's down South to the war; and it 'll do the old woman a sight of good to see a young pleasant face like yours. The old turnpike road's a pleasant 'un, too, and it ain't more'n a mile to *Miss* Ritter's door."

The prospect of doing some good stirred Grace at once.

"Yes, I'll go there, mother," she said, with a show of cheerfulness; and Mrs. Palmer went down stairs, congratulating herself on her diplomacy.

Grace's mother was right. The soft warm afternoon, with its radiant mists going and coming in solemn state upon the mountains, was one which belonged only to the early autumn. Its pulses beat soft and low with the ripeness of the year; its face was not radiant with sunshine, but it shone sweet and tender in the eyes of the girl who carried her aching heart down the long, lonely turnpike road, with the dark rocks on one side and the brown pastures on the other; and something of the stillness and gladness of the afternoon got into Grace's heart, and hushed the pain there; and when at last she knocked at the door of Mrs. Ritter's low brown dwelling, the inward peace shone in her face.

The little old woman that bustled to the front door in her linsey-woolsey dress and deep yellow cap-frill, gave Grace a most demonstrative welcome.

"It beats all how I've been wantin' to see you for the last two hours. I can't hardly believe my eyes! Grace, I've got some news for you!"

"Have you? Well, I shall be ready for it as soon as I've disposed of something mother sent you with her love this afternoon," placing the bowl and bottle on the table.

"I declare, Grace, your mother's a masterpiece for rememberin' them that other folks is apt to forget. I shall reckon on that ere wine and jam as though 'twas so much gold. Things all smooth to home?"

"Very, thank you. Now for the news, Mrs. Ritter?" taking a chair. "You see I've only half an hour to give you."

Mrs. Ritter plunged her hand into a very deep and plethoric pocket on her right side, and produced, with a look of solemn mystery, a large and somewhat soiled sheet, and handed it to Grace, saying: "That ere was writ by Sam'wel!"

"Mrs. Ritter!" gasped Grace, her whole face lifting itself into eager curiosity as she looked on the sheet, for Mrs. Ritter's grandson was a private in the regiment that Major Dudley had joined.

"I don't wonder you look taken aback, Grace; it fairly did me up when the letter first come. Cap'n Jacobs brought it up to-day from New York, and he got it straight from the soldier into whose hands that blessed boy put it. I've strained my eyes over the lines, Grace, and I've jest made out enough to know that Sam'wel is alive and doin' well, and ain't forgot his poor old grandma; but I've been wishin' all the arternoon that I could get your young eyes on the letter, and it seems as though the Lord had sent you jest at this perticerler minute!"

Grace opened the sheet and read the contents to the eager old woman. The letter had been written hastily the day after the battle. Samuel Ritter had just escaped being made prisoner; and, completely exhausted by the fight and his subsequent escape, he had crawled to the house of a farmer in the neighborhood whose son was the next day to start for the North, bearing dispatches from Gates to the Commander-in-Chief. So the young soldier availed himself of this opportunity to acquaint his grandmother of his welfare.

"Poor Sam'wel," said the old woman, taking off her glasses and wiping her eyes: "The Lord's spared a remnant of my family to my old age."

"Oh, here's a postscript I didn't observe!" exclaimed Grace, turning over the sheet, and she read :

"I forgot to say that, just after the last charge of the enemy, I saw Major Dudley fall off his horse. The chances are ninety-nine to a hundred that he was killed outright. He was a brave fellow, and all the boys loved him."

Grace read these words steadily to the end like one who hardly comprehended them ; then the letter dropped from her hands and she sat staring at Mrs. Ritter with a face that was like the faces of the dead.

The old woman, who knew perfectly well the relation which Grace occupied towards Major Dudley, was too overwhelmed to utter a single word. But at last the silence and the white face frightened her into speech : "Don't, dear child, take it so," stammered the old woman.

Then Grace rose up. "I must go home," she said, in just the slow leaden tones in which one might say : "I must go to my death ;" and before Mrs. Ritter could expostulate she was gone.

Years afterwards Grace could recall that walk home on the old turnpike road and every object which met her on the way, although she was unconscious of noticing it at the time. She could see the great, swift, silent clouds, as they came and vanished in the sky like dumb witnesses of her anguish ; she could see the golden rod waving its torches of flame by the stone fences, and how the road stretched its long blank face of sodden grass before her—the long, long road that seemed to her to lie miles and miles away before it reached her father's door, and which she must tread, step by step, with the slow pain dilating in her heart like a smouldering fire, which she expected would burst up any moment and suffocate her.

At one time—she must have been about half way home then—a little golden robin alighted suddenly on a small ash by the roadside and sang out brave and sweet in the deep silence. Grace stood still and looked at it, and wondered that anything in the world could be joyful again. What a world it seemed to her then! How utterly blank and desolate! And yet she kept on with her face set towards her home—kept on step by step; step by step!

Mrs. Palmer was bustling about her “china closet,” which she was “cleaning out” that afternoon, as she was expecting the Parson and the Doctor to tea on the following day. She was carefully wiping the “sugar-tongs,” when the door opened and Grace suddenly entered.

“Oh, mother!” she said. It was not a loud cry, but her mother started as though a sudden blow had struck her.

“What has happened to you, my child?” she said, coming forward, and then she saw the white face.

“*Mother, he is dead!*” said Grace Palmer, and she sank down into a chair and looked up in her mother’s face and smiled. Such a smile! No wonder Mrs. Palmer closed her eyes involuntarily as one does before a sudden burst of blinding light.

“Don’t, child; don’t,” she said, sharply: and then she opened her arms and Grace lay white and shivering within them.

Mrs. Palmer was too much alarmed for the safety of her child, to realize the loss she had sustained. She carried Grace into the bedroom, and in a few minutes the Deacon and Benny returned together, for it was now sunset. The sight of his darling lying there, just as the dead lie, with her face as cold and white as the linen on which it rested, was too much for the old man.

He turned away and left her with her mother, and for the first time in her life Mrs. Palmer's heart rose up against her husband.

But he came back in a few moments and went straight up to the bedside and leaned over his child, stricken almost to death.

"Grace," said the soft, solemn voice of the Deacon, not knowing whether she would hear or understand; "'In the day of my trouble I will call upon Thee; for *Thou* wilt answer me.'"

She opened her eyes then and looked at her father.

"You know Who it was said that, my poor child?" said the shaking voice of the Deacon.

"Yes; but oh, father!"

"I know it, my daughter. I would lay down my life gladly this moment to bring you help or comfort; but you are in those deep waters now where no human arm or love can reach you. Oh, Grace, you have not believed in the Lord for naught. He will not forsake you now!"

She turned away her head; the slow tears oozed out of her eyes, and the father knew that the broken heart of his child was comforted.

"Mother, what is the matter with Grace?" asked Benny in a loud whisper, seizing hold of his mother's skirt as she left the bedroom in search of a fan.

"She's heard that Major Dudley is dead, Benny," answered the weeping mother.

Benny's face expressed deep concern; still he continued: "She feels as bad as though it was you, or father, or Robert; and it isn't half so bad as that."

"You shouldn't speak so, Benny. Major Dudley was a friend, a very dear friend of your sister's."

"But it isn't the same for all that, you know, mother," subjoined Benny, with some show of indignation ; and then suddenly exclaimed, as though a new idea had struck him : "Maybe, after all, he isn't dead !"

"Why, Benny ?" catching faintly at these words. "What makes you say so ?"

"Cos they all thought Hezekiah Street was dead until t'other news came. Where did Grace hear it ?"

"She must have got the news from *Miss* Ritter. I haven't been able to get one word out of her sence she came home. There, Benny, you musn't keep mother any longer."

Benny made no effort to do so. Without speaking a word to any one, he put on his cap and trudged over the turnpike to Mrs. Ritter's, with whom he happened to be an especial favorite. He found the old woman in extreme anxiety about Grace, and soon drew from her all the knowledge she possessed of Major Dudley's fate. The boy also applied for the letter of Samuel Ritter, and obtained it to show to his father ; and just as he reached the threshold he turned and said, in his solemn, tremulous way : "Maybe he isn't dead after all, Aunty ?"

"What has put *that* into your head, child ?" asked the old woman ; but he was beyond the range of her voice.

Great was the Deacon's surprise when his youngest born placed the letter of Samuel Ritter in his hands ; and the surprise was not diminished when he discovered the manner in which he obtained it ; but Benny's acuteness had for once done better service than the wisdom of his elders ; for, after possessing himself of the contents of the letter, the Deacon and his wife both cherished a faint hope that Edward Dudley might still survive.

Grace shook her drooping head when they first endeavored to communicate this hope to her; but the words found their way into her heart and made a little light there—just as the stars of that autumn night which settled darkly over the homestead of Deacon Palmer made a faint frilling of light on the sky.

Afterwards Grace Palmer did not yield to the blow which had fallen on her life. The day following she rose from her bed and went about her household duties busily as ever, only more silent. Mrs. Palmer did not expostulate with her daughter. The education and the habits of the Deacon's wife tended strongly to convince her that "indulgence in the luxury of grief" was unwise, if not sinful; and that active, engrossing labor was the next best thing to the grace of God for any sorrow that was inevitable.

And so, though her heart yearned with unutterable tenderness over her child, and she followed with eyes of wistful solicitude the rapid figure as it moved in and out of the room at its customary morning duties, the mother, on the whole, took pains to expand rather than diminish the day's labor, and Grace made no objection; only, looking in her eyes, one saw that some great sudden storm of anguish had beaten down on her life and torn up its roots.

Once that morning, however, the girl's heart gave way. She had gone into the parlor, at her mother's request, to bring out a jar of plum preserves which Mrs. Palmer feared had begun to "work." As she crossed the threshold the old memories surged in upon her soul. There was the old lounge where he had sat last; and she seemed once more to look up into the strong, handsome face, and hear the low, tender voice; and then she thought of the stately head, with its beautiful brown hair lying white and dagged

on that dusty battle-field ; it was too much. Grace Palmer sank down on the low stool where she had sat that last time with Edward Dudley, and low sobs of utter desolation shivered and surged through her.

At last, wondering at her long absence, her mother came softly to the door and put her anxious face inside. She saw Grace sitting there bowed under that tempest of anguish. Mrs. Palmer made a movement forward, for her first impulse was to spring to her child's side ; but a second thought checked her. This great grief was beyond even the reach of her mother's sympathy, and Mrs. Palmer left the room on tiptoe ; and an hour later Grace came out with her pale, calm face, and set quietly about the work she had left.

"I guess the Lord's heard my prayer," thought Mrs. Palmer.

And so the days went over Grace Palmer. There was nothing for her to do but to "wait patiently" for the tidings which yet her soul shrank from meeting ; for Grace's sound judgment taught her that the chances for Major Dudley's life were just what Samuel Ritter had written. Yet her heart would cling, as what woman's heart will not, to its faint hope still ; and for the rest, Grace had Refuge that was to her soul the shadow of a Rock in a weary land.

There were hours when her faith could look even this great loss in the face ; hours when she felt that she could give up Edward Dudley to the will of God. He would not be *dead* to her ; the true, noble, manly spirit that she had loved lived somewhere, doing the will and the work of God as she would do it on earth. She would still be worthy of him—knit to him by a love which reached be-

yond the grave and rested in the one eternal love. She would live cheerfully, bravely, if not happily, doing to others all the good she could, and rejoicing that every setting sun brought her a little closer to the time of their long meeting; and when the morning light wakened her once more to the day's work and waiting, she would remember that one more night of the long absence was passed. And the heart of Grace Palmer said to herself what, long years after, the greatest of her sisters sang:

"I praise Thee while my days go on;
I love Thee while my days go on;
Through dark and dearth, through fire and frost,
With emptied arms and treasure lost,
I thank Thee while my days go on!"

The girl's parents sometimes wondered at the solemn light and joy which shone in her face—the face which grew paler and thinner every day; but they knew what springs fed that light, and they thanked God for their child.

Do not think, O reader, that I write of Grace Palmer that it was always thus. She would have been more than human if it had been. There were times when her heart and her faith failed her; when the sense of her great loss overswept her soul in a wild freshet of agony; times when she looked off to her future, stretching blank and desolate down the years before her as the sodden turnpike had stretched *that* day towards her home, and the girl's grief would reach up in a cry: "O God! it is more than I can bear!" and the prayer would rise to her lips: "Let me die and go to him," and stop there; for Grace Palmer knew she had no right to speak it. Was it strange that her faith went into these eclipses? She was young and her heart was so utterly stricken?

CHAPTER XXI.

"THERE, now, see what you've done!" exclaimed Lucy Trueman, in a tone made up of vexation and deprecation.

"Oh, Benny, you are a naughty, careless boy!" added Grace, in tones just touched with severity.

"I didn't mean to," answered the boy, plunging his fingers in his hair and looking somewhat ruefully at the red beads which he had just upset from a large china-saucer, and which sprinkled the sanded floor like the red coral moss-blossoms among grey leaves.

"I'll help you gather them up, Lucy, in one minute," said Grace, as she threaded a very fine needle with silk.

"No, Grace; if you'll finish the bud, I'll save the beads," and Lucy bent herself to work on the floor.

The girl was working a large pincushion for her mother's "spare chamber," and she had come over that afternoon to get some advice from Grace respecting the centre flower. This, at least, was her ostensible purpose; but of late Lucy Trueman had found some excuse for showing herself at the Deacon's almost every day; and Grace understood well enough the kindly sympathy which prompted the frequent visits, although very few allusions were made, after the first meeting, to the subject that was never absent from the thoughts of either. But Lucy proved herself so solicitous at this juncture; she made such constant efforts, and with so much tact and good sense, to interest and divert

Grace, to draw her from the terrible thoughts that *would* sometimes come upon her; she was so full of tender yet judicious sympathy, that Grace could not but respond to her friend's efforts, and be deeply touched by the affectionate care which they evinced.

"It's a beauty, Grace!" exclaimed Lucy, putting her face over her friend's shoulder and surveying the moss rose-bud which was opening itself on a groundwork of white satin. "Come, now, let's put it up and go out doors awhile. I do hate to waste such pleasant days in the house. There won't be many more of them, you know."

"I know," strangling a little sigh, which, however, did not escape the ear of Lucy as she rose up and went for her sun-bonnet.

They went down to the orchard, Lucy leading the way and Grace following indifferently, for her thoughts were with that afternoon, six weeks before, on which she had walked over the turnpike. The frost had been busy among the trees since that time, and the maples flamed in the woods, and the russet and yellow leaves were dropping from the fruit-boughs with every puff of wind.

Lucy led the way to the old apple-tree in the centre of the orchard—the very one to which Grace had conducted the minister's nephew on the first night of their meeting. Had Lucy known what associations clustered around this peculiar tree she would certainly have avoided it.

"Isn't it pleasant?" said Lucy, pulling off her sun-bonnet and seating herself on the long grass amid which the red apples burned.

"Very pleasant," said Grace, with a start, coming back to the present and gazing about her; and then there came one of those sudden thrills and rushes of feeling that break down all barriers, as that autumn night, six years before, rose up to her.

"Oh, dear!" she said, and burying her face in her hands, she burst into tears.

"Grace, I'm so sorry for you!" whispered Luey, drawing close up to her friend; "only it don't do any good to say so."

Grace did not speak for a while; at last she looked up with pale lips that seemed seeking after a ghost of a smile.

"There's no need of your *telling* me, Luey, that you're sorry. I feel it all the time."

"Poor Grace," stroking her friend's shoulder in her pretty caressing way. "But you're so brave, so different from what I should be," and Luey shuddered a little.

"Not always, Lucy," shaking her head sadly. "There are times when it all comes over me, and it seems as though I should be crushed at once. I seem to see *him* lying there on the battle-field with the clouds of smoke and dust and the roar of cannon all about him. I hear the cries of the wounded, the moans of the dying, and I see the bright flashes of musketry and the wild, riderless horses going to and fro. But I see the clearest of all that white, still face, with the closed eyes and the matted hair, and the blood trickling over it; and I think, Lucy, if I could have been there just one little moment to have lifted up his head, to have heard his last blessing, to have had one little faint smile"—she stopped here.

Lucy did not dare look at her friend; she turned away with a little groan.

It was Grace's voice broke the silence. The anguish was gone out of her face when she turned it around once more to Lucy and said:

"It is best so, for it was God's will!"

Lucy Trueman looked on her friend with a new yearning for a faith which could sustain her in so awful a trial; but she did not say this; her words were:

"There is room for hope yet, Grace; he *may* not have been killed."

Whatever Grace's answer would have been, it was cut short by the appearance of Nathaniel walking hurriedly up to the front door.

"He must be after me," exclaimed Lucy, with a little chagrin in her voice. "Company at home, I s'pose," and she sprang up and called her brother loudly.

Nathaniel wheeled about and hurried to the orchard.

The young man's face was full of excitement and eagerness as he approached the girls.

"What have you got to tell me?" asked Lucy, interpreting the expression.

"'Tisn't for you; it's for Grace."

"Oh, Nathaniel, have you got good news for *me*!" cried Grace, a quick intuition springing her to her feet.

"I think I have, Grace." Then seeing her agitation, and fearing lest the suddenness of the news might prove too much for her, the young soldier added lightly: "I didn't expect to find you two girls turned gipsies and camping under an apple-tree."

"Tell *me*, Nathaniel," cried Grace, taking no notice of his jest.

And Nathaniel drew a letter from his pocket and gave it into her hands with some misgivings.

"It's *his* writing," was all he said.

So it was! The girl's eager eyes confirmed it, and Grace sank down on the grass.

"Let us leave her," whispered Lucy to her brother, some fine instinct teaching her that Grace should be alone now.

It was some time before Grace knew they were gone. She sat there with the letter lying on her knee, her eyes devouring the handwriting while she seemed incapable of opening it. But this did not last long. The seal was broken and the letter was :

"Be comforted, dear Grace, for *I live* ; and the thought that you might be mourning me as dead has been bitterer than all the pain which I have endured in the last two months. You have learned before this of the defeat of our army at Camden, and since then I have been a prisoner of war in the enemy's hospital.

"I have no knowledge of the time when I was taken off the battle-field, or of days after that. I had a bad shot in the right leg, and the surgeon says *I shall be lame for life*.

"Don't take it hard, dear. It is not so bad as it seemed that it must be a little while ago ; for, Grace, I have been nigh unto death !

"I am better now ; out of danger, the doctors say, and with a brave heart although a very feeble hand, as these tremulous letters bear witness.

"Look only at the bright side, my darling. There is much for which to say, 'Thank God !'

"I am in comfortable quarters, and the weather will grow cooler soon. I shall be exchanged when my turn comes; till then we must both have courage and patience.

"My physician interdicts longer writing. Be of good cheer, oh my beloved, for the sake of your

"EDWARD."

Nearly an hour had passed before Grace rose up from her seat under the apple-tree. She went up to the house. I need not say how different the world looked to her.

Mrs. Palmer sat in a corner of the kitchen carding wool; on one side of her the white pile lay like a fleecy cloud dropped from the sky.

"Mother, Edward's alive!" said Grace; and her voice made the words a song.

The wool dropped from Mrs. Palmer's hands. "What did you say, Grace?" she asked.

"I said Edward was alive, mother."

"How do you know that?"

"His own handwriting says so; here it is!"

"Oh, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Palmer; and here she broke into tears, and Grace put her arms around her mother, and they wept their tears of joy together.

Nathaniel and Lucy had been unwilling to return home until they were satisfied of Major Dudley's safety; although the former had little doubt of this, for he was perfectly familiar with the young officer's handwriting. The brother and sister concluding that by this time Grace's first agitation would have somewhat subsided, presented themselves once more at the Deacon's to hear the good tidings, which it did not take long to communicate.

"How in the world did you get this letter, Nathaniel?" asked Mrs. Palmer, anticipating her daughter's question.

"I happened to be at the post-office when the stage came in, and as Mr. Jacobs had an attack of rheumatism and couldn't leave his bed, I offered to open the bags for him; and when I saw Grace's letter I knew what it meant."

And he turned and smiled on Grace, and she answered him; and the smiles of both were beautiful to see.

"You must stay to tea, both of you," said Mrs. Palmer, getting up and shaking from her apron the little spray of wool which clung to it. "We'll all rejoice together over these glad tidings."

"I want to have a little piece of rejoicing to myself," said Lucy, with her light laughter between the words. "Come up stairs, Grace, and we'll leave Nathaniel and your mother to congratulate each other."

Lucy bestowed her friend with playful violence in the large rocking-chair, and seated herself on the arm, and taking the soft cheeks between her palms, she broke out:

"Now, Grace, darling, how *do* you feel? I am so glad; so glad for you."

"I hardly know how I feel, now the first great surprise and joy is over; only I am just beginning to realize that he is—" her lips quivered, she could not yet speak the words Edward Dudley had written of himself.

Lucy was ready and skilful in comfort. "But it isn't a quarter as bad as it might be if he had lost his eyes, or one of his limbs, or been cut up as many poor fellows are. Why, it's nothing in comparison, Grace."

"I know, and I shall always remember this; but, when I think that I shall never watch him go down to the gate

again with his quick, manly step, that he is maimed for life, it is hard at first. Maybe I was too proud of him." She said this with a touching humility.

Lucy argued, and comforted, and sympathized; and Grace smiled faintly, and listened, and struggled with herself, until Mrs. Palmer summoned the two girls down stairs.

Grace found that her father had returned; and when he saw her, in the overflow of his joy and sympathy the Deacon took her in his arms before them all and kissed her. "My daughter, the Lord has been very good to us!" was his simple comment.

And when they sat round the Deacon's table that night, heaped with a little more than its usual abundance, Nathaniel said: "I can't tell you, Grace, what a burden lifted itself from my thoughts when I saw that letter. I've felt for the last three weeks as though I'd lost my best friend."

"Complimentary to mother and me!" said Lucy, with her pretty, pert toss of the head.

"Well, then, withdraw your interdict about my joining the regiment this fall and I'll except you both."

Lucy shook her head, and the Deacon interposed: "Nathaniel, you served your country well while you could; and it would have been foolhardy to j'in the army so long as your health was so frail. You owe some care of your life, my boy, to your mother and sister."

"I know it, sir; and the one great aim of their existence seems to be to prove to me that I'm made of nothing better than fine porcelain. But when I think of Dudley and Robert, and a hundred other brave fellows in the field, it seems a burning shame for *me* to be staying here at home

poring over my books ;” and Nathaniel’s face flashed and faded a little as he caught Lucy’s deprecating eyes.

“ Perhaps there’ll come a chance for you yet, Nathaniel,” said the Deacon ; and though no one took particular notice of this speech at the time, they all remembered it afterwards. “ It’s been a strange summer,” continued the Deacon, a little later, “ with men’s minds kept constantly on the watch for movements of the enemy and the tidings down South ; but there’s nothin’ equalled that treachery of Benedict Arnold’s.”

“ Yes, that *does* beat all,” subjoined Mrs. Palmer, as she passed her cake ; “ I knew his mother, *Miss* Arnold, almost as well as I do yours, Lucy ; and she was a good, pious woman, and brought her son up in the fear of the Lord, if ever a mother did. It would have broken her heart outright if she’d known that he’d ever turn traitor to his country. Dear me ! mothers don’t know what their boys is a coming to !” and she glanced anxiously towards Benny, who was quite too much absorbed investigating the substratum of his cake of dried currants to perceive the drift of her remark.

“ It was one of the blackest deeds that history ever recorded,” added Nathaniel Trueman. “ And what has the man gained from his treachery, looked at from a merely material stand-point ?—the scorn of every honest heart in the world, the execrations of all his own countrymen ; certainly it hasn’t paid this time to serve the devil, Deacon Palmer.”

“ It never does, my boy, in the long run.”

“ But there’s that poor Major Andrè,” suggested Mrs. Palmer. “ I declare it did seem dreadful to have that young man hung, father ! Think of his poor mother and sisters !”

"It was one of the awful necessities of war; and that can't al'ays take mothers and sisters into consideration."

"What a dreadful thing war is!" said Lucy Trueman, her bright face clouded with seriousness.

"Dreadful! But dishonor and slavery are worse!" said the Deacon.

And so the talk went and came, very much as ours does now, round that supper-table in the days of the Revolution.

CHAPTER XXII.

ANOTHER year had come and gone, and the day long dreaded dawned at last for New London. It was a pleasant autumn morning, that sixth of September which we all have read of; the apples were ripening in the orchard, the nuts in the forests; no touch of the frost had shrivelled the leaves into yellow parchment or burned them into crimson; it was a fair and peaceful morning, with white mists like a camp of shining tents unfurled on the distant hills; the sweet exhilarating scent of sassafras, and pine, and fern filled the air; the birds sang the joyful songs they had sung through all the summer mornings which had just gone by, and the blue smoke curled up lazily from the many homesteads of the pleasant town, that sat that morning as it would never again sit by the blue Thames.

With the early dawn of that day whose history was to be written in fire and blood, and in one of the most shameful massacres that ever disgraced humanity, the inhabitants of New London were aroused from their slumbers by the alarm guns from Fort Griswold on the opposite side of the Thames. Anxious faces were soon peering from every window and house-top towards the large fleet of the enemy which stood off the harbor. And when the sun rose, it rose on a distracted town and on a heart-rending scene.

The inhabitants knew too well the character of the enemy they had to deal with to dare to trust themselves

in his power, and there was no resource but to seek safety in flight. The streets were full of mothers hurrying away with their little children; of old and young alike seeking some place of refuge; cries of terror, confusion, lamentation filled the sweet morning air, and all this time the proud war-ships rode slow and threatening towards the town.

Sir Henry Clinton had discovered at last the destination of the American army, which its Commander had concealed from him by such a series of masterly manœuvres. That army was now far on its march to Yorktown to join the forces assembled there. The British general saw at once the great advantage which Washington had gained by this move, and the imminent peril to which Lord Cornwallis would now be subjected. Stung with mortification and filled with apprehension on first learning the destination of the American army, Sir Henry Clinton resolved, as a kind of counterplot, to strike a fearful blow on New London, which might possibly have the effect of detaching a part of the troops intended for Yorktown for the protection of Connecticut; and the command of this expedition, which signalized itself by all that is barbarous and bloodthirsty in warfare, was given to the arch-traitor, *Benedict Arnold!*

“Daughter,” said Deacon Palmer, giving the spy-glass to his daughter, for the signal guns had aroused the family at the homestead, “your eyes are younger than mine. Look off to the southward and tell us all you see.”

The Deacon and his daughter were at the top of the house. Mrs. Palmer and Benny stood at the foot of the ladder which led to the scuttle, awaiting, the one with trembling anxiety, the other with boyish curiosity, for the tid-

ings. Grace steadied the glass and swept the harbor with her gaze.

"There is a fleet of ships and transports sufficient to carry thousands of troops. They are moving straight towards the town! Oh, father, what shall we do?" setting down the glass.

"What shall we do, father?" echoed Mrs. Palmer at the foot of the ladder.

"Look to the Lord for help against the mighty!" answered the solemn voice of the Deacon; and the words strengthened all their hearts.

Deacon Palmer took hasty counsel with his family.

"Don't you think we'd better set to work and pack up and hide as much as we can? The British'll take and destroy whatever they can lay their hands on!" asked Mrs. Palmer, trying to speak very calmly.

"I don't think they'll be very likely to get out as far as here. The militia'll be on hand to hold 'em back, but they'll fight at fearful odds. You may as well pack up your silver and any little trinkets you or Grace have, and I'll bury 'em with my papers at the back of the barn. As for the household goods, there's no use in tryin' to conceal 'em, and we must leave them to take their chance."

"I'd like to see them British come to *my* house!" exclaimed Benjamin, who had listened to all this conversation with wide eyes and mouth, and he dashed his small fists fiercely in the air at an imaginary foe.

"Oh, Benny, poor child, what could *you* do!" exclaimed his mother, looking at him sorrowfully.

"I could do a great deal!" his self-esteem somewhat wounded. "Ain't I nine years old?"

Mrs. Palmer did not smile now, as under other circum-

stances she would have been very likely to do ; and the next moment her youngest born set off energetically to assist his father in preparing a place of concealment for whatever was most valuable or precious to his family.

Grace went to her own room and took out Edward's portrait, and gazing on the beloved features, a thrill of thankfulness went over her that both he and Robert were absent, and that she was spared from the haunting anxiety which would fill so many hearts that day ; and then she thought with a pang of Nathaniel Trueman and his mother ; he was at home ; he would be among the first to join the militia that the signal guns were calling together to resist the progress of the foe.

Grace had not seen her betrothed during this year, as she had at one time ventured to hope. He had remained at the hospital nearly until spring on account of his wounds, and when at last he was exchanged, did not solicit a furlough, as he had previously anticipated doing, because of the arrival of his friend General Greene at the South. The latter, on taking command of the Southern army, had earnestly entreated that the young officer would remain with him. The Major had recently been promoted to the rank of Colonel.

The various articles which it was thought best to secure were hastily stowed in a strong box and buried in the rear of the barn. Then Deacon Palmer returned to his wife and said quietly, but in that kind of voice which showed that his mind was made up :

" Wife, give me your blessing, for I'm goin' to start right off to j'in the militia !"

" Oh, father, such an old man as you !" gasped the deprecating voices of the wife and daughter.

"No matter for my age, so long as I've got stout muscle enough in this right arm to aim a musket. Every man that can do that, old or young, ought to set out now. Mother—Grace, you won't be the one to keep me from doing my duty?"

The two pale women could not say a word. The Deacon went up stairs and brought down his musket. His wife slipped his breakfast into his hands. Then the old man commended his family "to the love of God," and set out.

Grace and her mother went to the top of the house once more, and watched the ships anchor and the debarkation of the enemy. They landed in two divisions of about eight hundred men each on either side of the river.

Arnold had command of the division on the New London side, and the two women traced with fear and anguish the path of the British troops by the gleam of their scarlet uniforms through the foliage. But in a short time they were summoned down again. All the roads leading from New London were filled with groups of panic-stricken women and children, fleeing from their homes and seeking shelter at the farm-houses along the road.

They met everywhere with cordial reception, but found nowhere a warmer and more sympathetic welcome than at the Palmer homestead. The Deacon's wife bestirred herself with her characteristic hospitality to furnish food and shelter for all who sought it under her roof that day.

"It's well we've got a full larder to share with 'em, Grace," she whispered to her daughter, as they set the tables; for the group of homeless, panic-stricken women increased constantly, and each had some pitiful tale to sob into Grace's ear or her mother's, and each had saved some precious relic which was confided to her care.

"Grace," said one pale, broken-hearted looking woman, slipping a small package into the girl's hand, "them's my little Tommy's red morocco shoes—the only pair that ever went on to his blessed little feet, and he was so proud on 'em. Last night he breathed his last in my arms, and his father had to hurry him off in a box to the graveyard and bury him without a parson or a prayer; but I was determined if the British got everything else I own in the world, they shouldn't have my little Tommy's red morocco shoes!"

"They shan't, either, without they have my life with them!" and Grace sobbed with the poor mother.

"Grace," said a very old woman, who had tottered out of the town leaning on her staff and the arm of a kind neighbor, "you don't s'pose them ere Britishers'll burn up the house where Jacob and I lived so many years?"

"I hope not, Auntie Platt. Do rest yourself in this arm-chair."

The old woman clasped her shrivelled hand on her staff with the bewildered, appealing look of a little child:

"Grace," she said, "I couldn't get along without the chimbley corner to sit in. There's no other place in the whole world that seems home to me. It's *my* corner, Grace, and my old oak-chair stands there that Jacob made me the second year we was married. You don't have any fears that they'll burn up my chimbley corner, do you?"

"I *hope* not," answered Grace, with a sinking of heart for the old woman's sake. "Do take a glass of mother's spiced bitters, Auntie Platt. They'll set you up after your long walk," and she pressed the glass into the old woman's shaking hands.

"Grace," called a third—a pale, grief-stricken woman, with an infant on her knee and three little children standing

about her—"you don't think they'll burn up my house in Widows' Row, do you? It's all I've got in the world to shelter me and my fatherless little children. I thought when word came that Jason was shot in the battle of Camden, that I wouldn't ask to live another hour if 'twasn't for my children; but what are they going to do now, poor little fatherless things, if the house is burnt down and they no father to care for 'em and no home to go to!"

And Grace looked from the mother to the little bewildered faces clustered about her.

"You and the children shall have a home with us, if the British burn yours," she said, out of the fulness of her heart.

And so the girl went, an angel of comfort from one stricken group to another, listening to the sad stories that were poured in her ear on every side, offering what comfort of cheer or sympathy she could, and losing all sense of her own sorrows in those of others. As for Benny, his sympathies were aroused into large activity by all he saw and heard. He made himself very useful to his mother and sister in their benevolent work that morning, and went everywhere, his merry face elongated with an expression of grave interest, although on the whole it must be admitted that he somewhat enjoyed the excitement.

At last, unable to contain himself any longer, he mounted a chair, rubbed his hands, and thus delivered himself:

"Look here, you folks, don't be scared if the Britishers do burn down your houses. You can all stay here just as well as not, and father 'll build on some new additions, and we can live together!"

A faint smile flitted over many a troubled face at this

generous offer of Benny's, and more than one voice said:

"He's a true chip of the old block."

But the anxiety of every one, whether general or personal, converged of course to one centre, and that was the progress of the British troops towards the town. There was a height covered with young oaks back of the Deacon's house from which the passage of the enemy could be watched with perfect security.

Arnold's progress to the town of New London was only slightly disputed. The militia, who manned an advance battery and Fort Trumbull, retreated before the overwhelming superiority of the enemy to Fort Griswold, on the other side of the Thames, and Arnold advanced and took possession of the town. He drew rein on a height which commanded it, and surveyed the scene before him. One wonders what feelings must have stirred the heart of the traitor at that moment! Every object that his glance touched must have been familiar to his eyes, for only a few miles to the north lay his birthplace. Did no memory of his guileless childhood oversweep his soul at that hour—no thought of the gentle mother who led him every Sabbath morning to the old church—no vision of the pleasant summer days when he played in the green pastures with his sister Hannah—did no thought of what he was *then*, of the deed he had come to do *now*, accursed of God and man, sting through his darkened soul, as he drew bridle on the height which overlooked New London, sleeping in the peaceful autumn sunshine? If any such memories overswept the soul of Benedict Arnold in that hour, they only stung it into fiercer desperation and deadlier vengeance. He waved his sword. "Soldiers, do your duty!" was his

infamous order to his troops; and then they set to their foul work of devastation and destruction.*

We all know what was done to New London on that day. The shipping and the public buildings were first fired, and then the inhabitants watched from a short distance the red flames as they rose up and wrapt their homesteads one after another. They wondered that the sun could shine and the pleasant sky look down calmly on that scene of horror.

"Oh, righteous Judge, come and rend the heavens; come to the rescue of Thy people!" prayed Grace Palmer, as she leaned herself heavily a moment against the side of the house, for she had been witnessing on the height the devouring flames, as home after home of those around her went down in their lurid glare, until her soul had sickened at the sight, and, unable to endure it, she sought the house. But the sun shone on, the blue sky smiled calmly over that day's work, and the destruction went on, in the pleasant old town that sat by the Thames. And fearful as were the scenes we have related, others of a far more terrible character were occurring on the eastern side of the river.

The history of that sixteenth of September was written at New London in fire; it was written at Fort Griswold in blood!

* For the sake of justice the writer subjoins the following:

"It ought to be stated as a general fact, that Arnold's orders appear to have been given with some reference to humanity and the laws of civilized warfare. Private houses were to be spared, unless in some few instances where the owners were particularly obnoxious. Yet no one can be certain that an excited soldiery will not transcend their orders, and scenes of distress must be expected in the train of reckless invasion."—*Miss Caulkins's History of New London.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

WE must draw briefly, O reader, and drop quickly for your sake and ours the curtain which hangs before that awful tragedy. The very heart-blood curdles to read the story as history with her calm voice relates it, and for the rest, they alike who wrought and they who suffered that woe are long since with God.

There were at the time but about one hundred and fifty men in the newly built fort, and two-thirds of these had hastened with whatever arms lay at hand to reinforce the slender garrison. The hearts of brave men beat, however, under those coarse garments, and when the British officer sent an insolent demand for absolute surrender, it was twice sternly rejected. Then the work of destruction commenced. The little band in the fort fought against the overwhelming numbers of the enemy, as brave men will for all they hold dear. Colonel Eyre, who commanded the British forces, was mortally wounded, and Major Montgomery, who succeeded him, thrust through with a spear; but at last the little garrison was overcome, the fort was carried at the point of the bayonet. Then the slaughter commenced—a slaughter in which it seemed that the foe was suddenly turned into a company of fiends.

Colonel Ledyard, the brave commander of the fort, who had said that very morning, as he stepped into the boat which was to convey him across the Thames: "If I must

this day lose life or honor, you who know me can tell which it will be," ordered his men to lay down their arms. He surrendered his own sword only to have it thrust through his body! Everywhere the helpless little band was hunted and slaughtered as men would only slaughter wild beasts. They lifted up their hands and cried in vain for mercy of their foes. They were gashed through and through, bayoneted over and over, pursued, ferreted out from every spot where they had sought shelter only to be slaughtered. The history of civilized warfare cannot furnish a massacre perpetrated with more diabolical fury than that which occurred at Fort Griswold. Eighty-four of the little band of brave men who had assembled in the morning for the defence of the fort at Groton were slain; the wounded lay all about in the hot afternoon sun, with none to offer them so much as a draught of cold water. But at last that long day of horrors drew to its close. The smoke rose slowly from the blackened hearths where the pleasant homesteads had stood that morning; the militia at last gathered together in such force from the neighboring towns as to render them formidable, and Benedict Arnold looked on and gave the order to retire.

The ghastly corpses at Fort Griswold were left where they had fallen; the wounded men were hastily packed one on top of another in a heavy ammunition wagon, and twenty of the enemy undertook to drag it down the steep ridge on the summit of which stood Fort Griswold. The weight was so great, however, that the men abandoned it, leaving the wagon to descend of itself. The sides of the hill were sprinkled with rocks, stumps, and bushes. The wagon, left to its own impetus, proceeded with accelerated velocity, and at length struck suddenly against an old

apple-tree, recoiled and swayed round, thus enhancing the agony of the mangled men inside, until their cries swept across the Thames and were heard amid the crackling of the flames and the confusion and distraction that reigned there. Several of the men were thrown upon the ground, several were killed outright. The sufferers were hastily conveyed into a house at the foot of the hill. Benedict Arnold left orders to fire the fort, and then taking what prisoners they could with them, the enemy set sail from the shores they had ravaged.

Deacon Palmer hurried home to relieve the apprehensions of his family at nightfall, and carry with him the joyful tidings of the departure of the enemy.

"Oh, father, have you been spared!" broke out Mrs. Palmer, as she saw the form which had never left her thoughts for a moment that day entering the door.

The Deacon set down his musket.

"Yes, Patience, the Lord's preserved me, and seen fit, I'm afeared, to take many lives of more account than mine. We've had an awful day, and I expect we don't know the worst on't yet, for there's been hot fitin' at Fort Griswold, but the enemy's left our shores."

There was a flash of joy on the pale faces of the women that had huddled round the Deacon; and as the old man looked from one to another, and saw many who the next morning would find their homes a blackened heap of cinders, his heart gave way, and he bowed down his head and wept.

"Has there been much fighting to-day, father?" asked Grace, when the old man lifted his head once more.

"Not much on our side the river. The militia was ready enough to go into the battle, but they wanted a fair

fight in an open field, and not to give the enemy the privilege of shootin' 'em to death cooped up in stone walls, where resistance would be useless."

At that moment the door was thrust wide open again, and Mrs. Trueman and Lucy hurriedly entered the room. The former addressed herself in a rapid, agitated way to the Deacon, seeming hardly conscious of the presence of the others.

"It's all Lucy's doin's that I stopped in here to see if anybody's goin' over to the fort, though I don't need company, and it's nonsense to talk about it now."

"No, it isn't, mother," put up Lucy's protesting voice. "I shall go with you unless you find somebody else to do it."

"What takes you over to the fort to-night, Mrs. Trueman?" asked the Deacon, with a sinking heart.

"Because my boy's there. He started off early this morning, and I must know whether he's dead or alive afore I can ever sleep again."

It was evident there was no use in attempting to oppose Mrs. Trueman. Lucy had been convinced of this, and leaving the tavern full of women and children, who had crowded there for shelter, she had accompanied her mother as far as the Deacon's, resolved that, much as she was needed at home at this juncture, she would not suffer Mrs. Trueman to visit the fort alone.

"It isn't safe for mother," said Lucy, in a tone whose decision reflected her parent's. "I shall keep close to her side unless there is some man here to take charge of her."

There was no one to accompany Mrs. Trueman but the Deacon, and the fatigue and excitement of the day, and the household of helpless women which needed his care, ren-

dered his departure almost impossible. Mrs. Trueman listened impatiently to her daughter's expostulations, and was making up her mind to end them by leaving the house, when a neighbor suddenly appeared at the door, to whom the matter was easily explained. The man offered to accompany Mrs. Trueman to Groton, thus ending all discussion.

Mrs. Trueman had just left the door when a light hand touched the Deacon's arm—a hand which he knew had a silent entreaty in it.

"What is it, daughter?"

"I think I may be of some use at the fort. Perhaps there are wounded men who need care."

The Deacon looked up in his daughter's face and hesitated.

"My child, you will be likely to see terrible sights. I'm afraid they'll prove too much for you."

"I can stand it;" her brave, steadfast face was witness for her. "Oh, father, if anybody that we knew or loved was lying there!"

He knew then that she was thinking of Edward and Robert.

"I will not stand in your way, my child," said the old man, and Grace hurried away and came upon Mrs. Trueman a few rods from the gate.

It was late that night before the two women could cross the ferry and reach the fort. Of the awful spectacle which presented itself to their eyes history has kept its sickening record. More than eighty men lay dead before them—more than eighty not killed in fair and open fight, but foully slaughtered by others whom the thirst for blood had turned into fiends. There they lay gashed and mangled,

and plundered after they were dead, so that many of them could not be recognised.

And amongst these, with the torches glaring wildly over their white faces, the women of Groton searched for their dead; that day's work had made forty widows. Every few moments some new shriek, breaking above the general sobs and lamentations, proclaimed that another beloved face had been recognised; while amid the groups was occasionally one who seemed utterly stupefied by the great shock of anguish, and looked on the dead with wild dry eyes without a moan.

In one corner sat a woman with a head pillowed upon her lap, the short black hair dagged in blood, while she rocked herself to and fro and kissed the white lips over and over.

"My little boy called to me when I left home: 'Mother, you'll bring pa back, won't you?' And I said: 'Yes, Tommy, I'll be sure to bring him!' And now when I go back alone he'll stretch out his hands and ask me for him the first thing, and how can I tell my boy that he is fatherless!" She said this lifting up her pitiful face to Grace, who had never seen her before.

And a little way from this woman knelt another, with her hands clasped over a mutilated form which that morning had been her husband.

"He called back to me as he went out this morning: 'Now, Nancy, keep up a brave heart, and expect me back with good news and a first-rate appetite for supper.' And I waited long past supper-time, but he didn't come—oh, he didn't come!" passionately sobbed the broken-hearted woman.

And this, O reader, was what the fathers and mothers

suffered to purchase our birthright of liberty. Grace took no thought for herself from the moment she left her father's door. Every other feeling had been absorbed in sympathy for Mrs. Trueman, who had scarcely spoken during the journey. The women had simultaneously staggered back at the spectacle which met their eyes when they first entered the fort, but in a few minutes the mother stepped forward and made a sign to Grace. A man who stood near passed a couple of torches to the women, and they commenced their search. Mrs. Trueman went first and Grace followed. One by one they searched—one by one. The glare of the torches dropped on each dead face a moment and then passed by, until it reached the last! Then Mrs. Trueman turned to Grace, and there came almost a smile to her white lips:

“Nathaniel is not among them!” she said, and as the awful dread lifted itself from her heart, Grace wondered if the mother rejoiced more than she did.

The early dawn once more looked in at Fort Griswold, when tidings were brought that the wounded men had been conveyed to the foot of the hill on which the fort stood. Mrs. Trueman and Grace hurried thither, both with unspoken fear in their hearts.

Sixty wounded men had passed that long night of anguish together under one roof, with no hand to relieve, nor voice save their own groans, to soothe their sufferings. The men lay as they had been carelessly tossed in here by the enemy after being plundered.

In one of the rooms, to the right, lay a little apart from the others the slender figure of a young man; the face was turned towards the east, whence the light would be sure to come. It was a face that, once seeing, you would never have

forgotten, but would have turned back to look at it again and again amongst all those faces. A smile of singular, I had almost said awful sweetness, lingered on the still lips and seemed to shed its peace over all the thin, beautiful face. The long brown hair clustered thick about it. There was no trace of violence on the features, only a deep wound near the breast; and at midnight out of that wound had gone peacefully the life of Nathaniel Trueman! His mother and Grace entered the room together. Their eyes fell upon the face turned smilingly to the east. It needed no second glance to tell that story, which sooner or later is all that can be told of any of us.

"He is dead!" said under her breath a woman who had followed the two.

"Sh—sh—" Mrs. Trueman turned round and smiled at the woman, a smile which made Grace shut her eyes when she saw it. "You'll wake my boy," she said; "he isn't dead, he's only gone to sleep!"

That first shock had been too much for the poor mother! She sat down on the floor; she smoothed the brown hair softly away from the cold cheeks with just the look of a mother watching over her sleeping infant.

"My pretty boy!" she murmured, "how sweet he smiles; he al'ays had jest that trick of smilin' in his sleep! How I've sat by his cradle and watched it for the hour together, until he looked so beautiful I'd grow almost afraid he'd take wings suddenly and fly away. He looks as if he might now; don't he, Grace?"

There came no answer, only a low sob. Mrs. Trueman looked up, and seeing Grace's tears she moved uneasily:

"Don't cry, Gracie," she said; "my boy isn't dead as they called him. Don't you see he's only gone to sleep!"

"Mrs. Trueman," said Grace, and her tears were still,
"*Nathaniel sleeps in God.*"

The truth seemed to flash upon Mrs. Trueman's mind. She drew down her cheek to Nathaniel's, put her arms about him :

"Oh, my boy," she murmured, "won't you let your mother come and sleep with you?"

A little later, when they went to remove the two, they found the mother lying unconscious, with her arms wrapped tight about her dead son.

CHAPTER XXIV.

NEARLY seven weeks later, Grace Palmer, wiping the breakfast dishes one morning, paused a moment, threw open the kitchen window, and looked out. It was a fine morning in the late October, with a keen sharp air which had a touch of the frost in it. She drank in the pungent odor of pine and sweet fern, with a pleasant savor from the sea. She saw how the maples had burned and the chestnuts paled when the frost walked in the night among them, and the golden-rod flamed by the farm fences.

The girl's thoughts went back as she gazed over the last seven weeks. They had been very busy ones for the family of Deacon Palmer. The friends who had found hospitable cheer under their roof, on that awful sixth of September, had mostly remained with them until they could return to their friends.

Their numbers had contracted gradually, until the only one who remained now was the old woman who had evinced so much anxiety for the safety of her "chimbly corner;" but this had not escaped the general conflagration; so the Deacon had generously offered her his, and the old woman had settled herself there in the placid contentment of second childhood.

"Grace," said a low, sad voice at the girl's shoulder. She turned quickly, to meet the face of Lucy Trucman. She had come softly round by the side-door, and the girl had not been in the house since *that* night.

"Oh, Lucy, I am glad to see you." All Grace felt at the moment was not in her words, but it was in her face.

"The doctor said I mustn't stay in the house another day," said the girl, "without taking the air; so I thought I'd step in a minute, Grace."

She was not the Lucy Trueman of old, with her arch, pretty way and breaks of laughter that lighted your heart. The spring was gone out of her voice and step, and the shadow of a great sorrow had fallen on the bright face.

In a grief such as Lucy's had been, one always feels the weakness and limitation of words. Grace did not touch it with these first, but she kissed Lucy, and held her hand in a tender caressing which had its language.

"I was thinking just that yesterday, that you'd certainly get sick if you kept in the house so close, and was going over this afternoon to force you into a walk with me."

At that moment Mrs. Palmer came in with an apronful of late squashes she had just gathered.

"Well, Lucy, I declare I'm beat!" was her homely welcome; but her voice made it a very cordial one, and she took off her sun-bonnet and emptied the squashes on the table.

"How is your mother, Lucy?" sitting down close by the girl.

"There don't seem to be much change, Mrs. Palmer. She hasn't set up for the last two days only to have her bed made, and don't seem to take any interest in the world. I can't rouse her only to talk about—you know."

The tears glistened in the eyes of both listeners.

"I should have been over yesterday afternoon if the

shower hadn't come up jist as I got through with cheese-pressin'. I'm still in hopes she'll be more reconciled."

"I've almost given up hope," continued Lucy, wiping the great tears from her cheeks; "but Parson Willetts says he hasn't. He comes to see mother every day, and you ought to hear his prayers and how he talks. It just lifts one right up from this world. He told mother he didn't believe that if Nathaniel had been his own son he could have felt his death more. You know he studied with the Parson for the last three years, and Nathaniel was so much attached to him."

"Can't he say something to comfort your mother, Lucy?" asked Mrs. Palmer.

"Oh, you'd think he *must* if you were to hear him talk. He said to her yesterday that she had cause for thankfulness above most mothers; that we could none of us tell what sorrow or darkness might have been Nathaniel's portion if he had lived; but now we were certain he had got beyond the reach of any possible pain or harm; and that, good and happy as he was on earth, he was better and happier now.

"'Mrs. Trueman,' said he, 'it's a great thing to have such a noble, beautiful youth as Nathaniel to give back to God who first gave him to you. When I think of the clear evidence he left of his beautiful Christian life, crowned by his noble death, I feel as if I could come to you and say, as though I spoke to you in God's stead: "Be comforted, for the child is not dead but liveth." And I know, too, that if Nathaniel stood here in my place he'd say to you: "Don't shed another tear; don't mourn for me another hour, mother. It's well with your boy; better even than all your love could make it." And, Mrs. Trueman, you

know, too, that much as you loved Nathaniel, he's gone where he's loved deeper and better than he is even in *your* heart.'

"Mother broke right out into a sob then, and it's the first tear she's shed since that dreadful day. 'I know it, Parson Willetts,' she said, 'but oh, my poor heart aches and cries for my boy, and I can't give him up.'

"'You haven't got to give him up. God is going to give you back our dear Nathaniel in a little while, and you'll have him for ever. Think of what *that* means!'"

Lucy was crying so that she could hardly get through with the Parson's speech, and both her auditors kept her company.

"I think it sank deep into mother's heart," continued Lucy, after a little silence; "I've sort of felt she was pondering on what the Parson said, although there hasn't seemed any outward change. And he said, too, that Nathaniel would be growing in this brief separation in all the beautiful and lovely qualities which drew our hearts close to him on earth, and that he would want those he loved to grow, too, and that sinking under any grief was not the way to do this."

"Oh, *that* must have touched the heart of your mother. You may depend, Lucy, it'll do her good, whether she seems to mind it now or not," said Mrs. Palmer, betwixt her tears.

And then they passed another half hour talking over all that was lovely in the life of Nathaniel Trueman, and telling anecdotes of him which they all hoarded like precious treasures in their memory. And then Lucy rose hastily, saying that her mother would miss her if she was gone longer.

Mrs. Palmer sent some particularly tempting pears, and a small china tureen of very dainty broth which she had prepared for the invalid the day before, and Lucy departed, feeling that her visit had done her good.

A minute later the door was burst wide open, and Deacon Palmer came into the room, his face full of some joyous excitement that seemed almost more than he could contain :

"Mother! Grace! Cornwallis is taken!" he cried.

Grace bounded from her chair to his side.

"Oh, father, is it true?" she cried, white for joy.

"True as the Gospel, my child. The news come straight. The Lord has risen for the deliverance of his people. The war has had its death-blow."

Even while he spoke the bells struck up the glad tidings; they heard the guns firing for the joy of the victory. That swift, silent march of Washington had done its work—a work from which not even the ravaged coast of Connecticut had diverted him. The final blow had been struck.

"Oh, my beautiful, precious, *free* country!" exclaimed Grace betwixt her jets of happy tears.

"Thank God, daughter, that you live to speak those words; that we live to see this hour, the happiest of my life," said her father.

The next moment Grace bounded from the house to the front gate :

"Lucy, Lucy Trueman, come back here!" she shouted to her friend, who was not quite out of sight.

And Lucy came back in mute wonder at the changed face and tones of Grace. She was seized by the arm and dragged unceremoniously into the house.

"Tell her the news, father."

And hearing it, the face of Lucy Trueman sprang out of shadow again.

"Even mother will be glad now!" she said, a little while later, as she started for home the second time.

"And tell her that Nathaniel helped to buy this day for us," added Deacon Palmer.

Of the day and the night that followed, with its ringing of bells, its blazing of bonfires on a thousand hills, who shall write fitly!

After seven years, the people held jubilee through all the land—a *free* people, a people who had bought with their best blood the great price of liberty.

And amid all the joy for her redeemed country which Grace felt at that time, and despite the patriotism which had proved itself with her so disinterested and pure, feelings of a personal character gave a deeper coloring to her gladness—feelings that she hid in her own heart until very late that night, when the tide of jubilant friends and neighbors had flowed out of the front door, and Grace found herself alone a moment with her father. She went up to him, laid her head on his shoulder, and whispered softly:

"Edward will be coming home before a great while, father?"

"I think he will. God has been very good to us, my little daughter." And he kissed her.

"God has been very good to us!" sang the heart of Grace Palmer, as she went up stairs to her room that night.

CHAPTER XXV.

"MOTHER, mother, the rose-bud has budded!"

There was a thrill of joy in the voice which said this just outside of the kitchen window on the first day of May, in the year of our Lord seventeen hundred and eighty-two. Mrs. Palmer paused a moment and looked up from the large earthen bowl of milk which she was skilfully relieving of its upper stratum of cream. She saw Grace standing there in her simple morning gown of homespun linen, with a small hammer in one hand and some twine in the other. She looked pretty, even to her mother's unartistic eyes, with the shadows of the tender green leaves thrown on her face; and the smile in her eyes repeated the thrill in her voice.

"I'm glad on't to hear about the buds; but I'm a great deal gladder to see you look so happy over it," was the mother's characteristic rejoinder.

And Grace looked what she felt that morning. The winter was ended. The great white embroideries of snow, which seemed to lie on her soul as they had lain cold and heavy on the earth, were gone at length. There was now no last faint etching of ice by the fences or on the bleak sides of the hills. The singing of birds filled the air; the fresh, sweet smell of the sprouting grass was finer than the breath of spices, and the soft spring sunshine was a praise and joy in the whole earth.

The winter had brought a bitter disappointment to Grace, for she had confidently expected to see Edward Dudley before its close. It was May now, and he had not come yet.

The Commander-in-Chief had been extremely cautious in granting his officers furloughs during the winter which followed the surrender of Yorktown. He dreaded any weakening of his forces, any confidence based on the late victory, which might lull into false security the hearts of his countrymen. Not until he was absolutely assured that the British Parliament were resolved on a cessation of hostilities, would Washington diminish his army or relax his efforts for another campaign.

So through the long, slow winter the heart of Grace Palmer had waited and ached, as many another of her countrywomen did through the winter which followed the battle of Yorktown. But a little while before, Colonel Dudley had written:—

—"When you hear the first birds of May, look out for my coming, Grace. I cannot tell just when it will be; but you may depend upon me."

And after that Grace waited for the singing birds, but in her heart the song was sweeter than theirs. It overran her lips that morning, as she fastened the twine and wound the tender green branches, in old psalm-tunes and hymns of Watts, and wreathed itself in and out of sweet homely old household melodies, and then suddenly fell down into a silence that went where song could not reach.

And as the girl stood there, with the sunbeams spilling themselves in golden wine on her head, a stranger rode suddenly out of the lane on the right of the house and drew up his horse in the road. He saw Grace Palmer at

her work, with the white handkerchief she had tied around her head fallen down on her neck, dragging a stray lock with it.

One look drank her in—hair, face, figure; and then the stranger put spurs to his horse and hurried to the front gate.

Grace did not start until she heard the click of the latch; then she turned suddenly towards the front gate. There was the first look of blank surprise, then her heart sprang and carried away all the color from her lips and cheeks. She moved towards the steps and stopped there with no power to get further. The man approached her, not rapidly; his left limb was hopelessly crippled, and if he had ever walked that narrow path with the free, strong step of youthful manhood, he would never do so again. His cheeks were browned deep with exposure, and bore the traces of suffering and hardship; but the voice which for six long years she had hungered for, asked, as the man put out his arms:

“Grace, can you tell *who* it is that comes to you thus?”

“Oh, Edward!” They were not loud words, but they were solemn witnesses of all the long anguish that had been—of all the tenderness and joy that were now in the heart of Grace Palmer.

He drew her to him; and Edward Dudley had never shaken in the midst of the hottest battle-field, where the dead were dropping thick about him, as he shook when he laid the fair head of Grace Palmer on his breast.

Then they went into the house together. Mrs. Palmer had gone out on some errand a little while before, and it was best that there were none to see them.

Of that day even Grace Palmer did not often speak in the future years of her life.

Neither was Mrs. Palmer's welcome, or the Deacon's later one, with many words. The former's, as soon as her first surprise and the tearful joy which followed it was over, took a practical channel, and she bestirred herself about getting a dinner somewhat worthy of her guest, but this time without so much as consulting Grace; and the young people passed the morning as they had one seven years before, in the parlor together.

When the Deacon returned home that day, he was partially prepared for the good tidings by finding the table set with the best linen and china; and for the rest, Mrs. Palmer, with no small sacrifice on her part, refrained from disclosing any facts, saying briefly:

"If you want to find out anything, jest walk into the parlor."

The Deacon followed her advice with a mixture of blank amazement and curiosity on his face, and confronted his daughter; and by her side sat Colonel Dudley!

A quarter of an hour later the Deacon said, rubbing his hands briskly:

"I forgot to bring mother's message about dinner; I'm afraid it'll get cold, and that's the one thing that 'll put her out."

"Dinner-time!" echoed Grace. "You don't mean to say it's that, father?"

"What else should bring me home, my daughter?" with a shrewd twinkle in his eyes.

"I thought that it was only ten o'clock," exclaimed the girl.

"I thought so, too," laughed the Colonel, looking at his watch. "Grace, will you believe it's past one?"

"Where *has* this morning gone to?"

"Where pleasant time usually goes," laughed her father; and the trio went out to dinner, hiding with light words and familiar jests the thoughts which filled all their hearts. But those grave feelings leaped to the surface with Grace as her guest handed her to the table.

"Oh, Edward! do you remember that spring, seven years ago, when you sat down here to dinner?"

"Do I? How many a time it has shone down on me, a light along the years, as I have munched my bread and beef in camp. Ah, Grace! there were times when I never expected to eat dinner here again!" And a little shadow stole over the young officer's face as he glanced down on his crippled limb.

She understood him and slipped her soft hand in his. There was no time for further reply then, for the Deacon bent his head to ask a blessing—such a blessing as had never been invoked at that table before.

"Are you *quite* so glad, my darling?" Edward Dudley asked this question during the afternoon as Grace sat on the low stool at his feet, where she had sat *that* last day, and where Edward Dudley had placed her for the sake of contrasting that hour with this one. She had been looking up in his face while he talked to her, not imagining half that her shy, sweet gaze said.

"So glad for what?" chimed the silvery voice.

"Why, as glad as your eyes say that you are, because you have me back again bruised and weather-beaten, broken and maimed for life?"

Spite of himself, his voice betrayed to the girl the one

sore place in his heart. The sweet eyes were not shy now. *

"Oh, Edward! I am so glad to have you back; this day and this hour so satisfies my life, that it seems as though I have not another earthly gift or blessing to ask of God; that if He should send me one, I must only answer: 'I have enough, and there is no room to receive it.'"

He bent his head down closer to Grace and almost whispered:

"Not the blessing of having me come into that door as I went out of it six years ago, Grace?"

She smiled now—a happy, contented smile, looking up steadily in his eyes.

"I shouldn't care one whit, Edward, for *my* sake."

For a moment he averted his head. There was evidently something in his face that even *her* tender eyes must not read. When he bent it down again there was no shadow of pain in it.

"My little girl—my dear little girl!" repeating the words as though they had a pleasant sound to him; "that is *almost* the sweetest thing you ever said to me."

Her quick, startled look answered him:

"Why, Edward! did you have any fear *there*?"

"Yes, and dread. Don't look pained, my child. It was altogether my fault, my *sin*. I never knew, Grace, that I had taken any pride in my physical strength, in my well-knit muscular frame, until the blow came, and then for a while I rebelled against it. The thought that I must be a cripple for life, even in the noblest of causes, was very hard, and I could not brook it, especially when I thought of you. But the false pride which God punished has gone

now, and those last words of yours have healed its pain *for ever.*"

And after these words there came, as was fitting, a silence.

Grace broke it, looking up with a thought which it did not require any great sagacity to perceive had taken a cross-road from their last topic.

"Eight years are a long time, Edward; they must have made some changes in me."

He stroked the oval cheeks tenderly.

"I don't see them," he said. "Despite all the care, and watching, and anxiety you have endured, these eight years have dealt very kindly with this one dear little face."

It was true. No one looking at the unbent lips, at the fair cheeks with the faint flush in them, at the brown eyes with the look of their childhood, would have fancied that the life of Grace Palmer was drawing towards its twenty-eighth birthday.

That first afternoon slipped away just as the morning had done. There was so much for each to hear and to tell; for manifold had been the perils which Edward Dudley had escaped by land and by sea, on the deadly battle-field, and in lonely midnight marches; and Grace listened and shuddered, and looked at the young officer, hardly believing that he could have been delivered from all these dangers and be sitting once more at her side. Some cruel memory suddenly drove a white terror over her face.

"What is it, Grace?" asked the young Colonel, taking her hands.

"I was thinking of the time when I read Samuel Ritter's letter. Oh, Edward! you don't know; it went down into the marrow of my life!"

"Dear Grace! I would have done anything to have spared you from that. But it wasn't true."

"No, thank God! it wasn't true!"

At that moment Benny put his face into the parlor—a boy's face, round, tanned, with black, roguish eyes.

"Grace!" he cried, "we've got up the flag!"

"That's in consequence of *your* coming, Edward," laughed the girl. "It affords you an occasion for a patriotic speech."

"Thank you, and—the boys. Benny, I'll come out and salute the thirteen stars after a while."

Benny came up to his sister, his wide eyes darting curious glances towards her guest. There was a question in his face.

"What is it, Benny?" bending down her head to him.

"I say, Grace, he didn't use to be lame, did he?" The whisper could have been heard to the remotest corner of the room.

"Sh!—sh! Benny."

"Don't be distressed, Grace; I've got over my weakness about *that*. No, Benny, I didn't use to be lame; but I shall be now as long as I live."

Benny's face showed sympathy through its tan and freckles. After he had left the room a new thought struck Grace.

"We must go over to Mrs. Trueman's to-night," she said. "Lucy and her mother will want to see you only less than I have."

"Not to-night, Grace. I must have you one day to myself. We'll go to-morrow. How is Nathaniel's mother now?"

"Very much as when I last wrote you. She's tried to

bear up under the blow after your uncle's talk with her, and got about the house some; but you'll see at once that her heart's broken."

"Poor Nathaniel!" sighed Edward Dudley, "his death went to my heart as no loss ever did; and yet it was not for him I grieved but for his mother. For the grief was all hers, the gain was Nathaniel's."

And so they sat and talked until all the west became alive and palpitated with the gold and maroon colors of sunset; and then Deacon Palmer returned home, bringing with him Parson Willetts, who had been absent all day and had just learned of the return of his nephew.

It had been settled that Edward and Grace should go over to the tavern next morning; but the grass had slipped off its last pearls of dew before they started, and they had not got far from the gate when a loud voice on their left hailed them suddenly.

"Face about, my friends, and give good-morning to a fellow-traveller."

Grace dropped Edward's arm and turned around sharply. A young man in a soiled, worn Continental uniform, with a knapsack on his shoulder, was approaching them.

"Oh, Edward, it's Robert!" The girl rushed forward and met her brother half way.

They all returned to the Deacon's; for of course there was no visiting at the tavern that morning. The young captain had managed the first meeting with his sister by concealing all that he felt on that occasion under light jests and good-natured bravado; but when he came to his mother, whom he had not met for three years, Robert Palmer quite broke down. The sight of her tears, the

mother-ery that broke from her heart as she caught a first glance of him, was more than he could bear.

But after a while they all grew composed again, and then there followed the old home-talk, the rapid questions, the pleasant gossip, and the familiar faces and ways, all sweetened by memories of the dangers and sufferings that were gone. Robert affirmed that it had been his intention to steal upon the household by surprise, and that he had been for four days indulging his fancies on the scenes that would follow. "But," with a shake of his head, "I exploded the moment I saw Edward and Grace, and it was all up with me then. My shout would come in spite of me."

"I should never have forgiven you if it hadn't," looking at her brother with fond eyes.

He rose up and stood before Mrs. Palmer and Grace, with his tall, lithe, slender figure.

"Well, mother—sis! do I come back from the wars much the worse for all the hard usage I've undergone?"

"Not a bit," with her smile, which had several meanings in it; "only you're several shades darker than when you went away."

"Most likely; going to war don't afford a fellow much chance to attend to his complexion—eh, Dudley?"

"We're all sufferers alike in that misfortune. My face isn't a shade lighter than yours, Robert," laughed the Colonel.

When Grace suggested that Robert should accompany them to the tavern that afternoon, the former answered:

"Let Lucy alone until evening, sis; she won't want to see you before that time."

"What makes you think so?" in much surprise.

"Because a gentleman took the stage with me at New Haven, and his name was John Deming."

"Oh, I am glad, for Lucy's sake! Poor girl! She has had to bear all her sorrows alone."

This was true. John Deming had not been able to visit his betrothed after the death of Nathaniel, for he had been promoted to an office in the commissary department, which, in the time of the Revolution, involved much perplexity and responsibility, and it was more difficult for him to obtain a furlough than for many who were in active service.

In accordance with Robert's suggestion, the young people started for Mrs. Trueman's after supper. They walked silently, for the heart of each was full of thoughts of Nathaniel, and of the poor broken-hearted mother who mourned through the slow days because she could not go to her boy.

A young moon was above the hills, touching the tops of the trees with faint silver, and the sky was full of the beauty of stars when they reached the tavern.

Lucy came to the door. *This* night she looked as Grace had not seen her since Nathaniel's death—like the old Lucy Trueman. Youth was strong in her, and love was deep; but this sorrow, terrible as it had been, had not ploughed up the roots of her life as it had her mother's.

But when her eyes fell on the friend who had been her brother's dearest one, her voice fell, as the new roses did in her cheeks, and she opened the sitting-room for her guests silently.

Mr. Deming, who was sitting there, came forward with a hearty greeting for his brother-officers, and then they turned towards Mrs. Trueman. She sat in an arm-chair by

the window ; but the brisk, bustling little woman of former days was gone for ever. Her knitting lay in her lap, and her face had a slow, listless, heart-broken look, which it hurt Edward Dudley to see more than any passionate grief could have done. He wrung the hand of Nathaniel's mother silently, and sat down without a word.

Then the talk of every one went, by mutual consent, on other topics than of him who seemed as close to each one as though he sat in their midst that night.

It was evident that the sight of the returned soldiers, especially of Colonel Dudley, had shaken Mrs. Trueman out of the usual torpor of her grief. She answered his questions about her health in an absent way, and caught up her knitting, and went to work at it with a kind of nervous impatience. Mr. Deming and Robert were conversing in a lone tone about the latter's return ; for it seemed this had formed a prominent subject in the morning stage ride, when Mrs. Trueman suddenly spoke, laying down her knitting :

"What did your mother *say* when she saw you, Robert?"

"She didn't *say* much ; she was too glad for many words, ma'am."

"And I'm glad, too, for her sake ; but oh, Robert, *I* haven't any boy to come back to me!"

The three young men felt the mother's grief at that moment as they never had before. No one could speak for a while. At last Edward Dudley did.

"Mrs. Trueman," he said, solemnly, "if our dear Nathaniel were to send you a message to-night desiring you to do anything for his sake and in his name, would you make an effort to do it?"

"Wouldn't I?" cried the mother, her voice breaking out into sudden sobs. "Wouldn't I go the round world over to do whatever my boy asked if I could only get one word from him?"

It was impossible to hear the mother unmoved; but Edward Dudley controlled himself to say :

"Mrs. Trueman, I bring you that word from Nathaniel."

And now the mother was not the only one who hushed her sobs and listened breathless.

"It was in the early part of the war," the young Colonel went on to say, "and one night it came Nathaniel's turn to serve on picket guard. It was a raw, blustering night, and I knew it was service he wasn't accustomed to, and thought it might help his half of the night along if I should go out and stay with him."

"Oh, Edward, that was good of you!" said Mrs. Trueman; it was the first time she had called him this, and she bent forward and took the soldier's hands in hers, and stroked them softly in just the same way as she had stroked Nathaniel's little ones long ago when he lay smiling on her lap.

"Nathaniel loved you!" she said, looking up into the young man's face with almost the look which had belonged to the dead. "He told me he did better than anybody in the world, except Lucy and me."

"And as though he were bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh did I love Nathaniel Trueman," answered Edward Dudley.

"That night we fell to talking, as was natural, about home folks, and Nathaniel said to me: 'I'm never a coward, Captain Dudley, except when I think of my mother. For myself, I'm ready to live or to die this night, as the

Lord sees fit, in the service of my country ; but when I think of mother, then, there's no denying it, I'm afraid.'

" 'And it's a fear that does you double honor, my young friend,' I said. 'I never put it in that light exactly,' answered Nathaniel. 'But you know just how it is. Mother's set her whole heart on me, and loves me better than we ought to love anything in this world, I s'pose ; and when I get to thinking if any harm should come to me how *she* would take it, I can't stand it, Dudley ; I can't stand it!' and he wrung my hand hard.

"And I answered him : 'Nathaniel, the Lord who gives you grace to say this night you are ready to do His will, be it for life or death, will give your mother strength to bear whatever grief or loss He appoints her.'

" 'But it's just there that my faith fails me. I know how her very life is bound up in mine, and I'm afraid she'd never look up again if she lost me. I can't have any fear for myself, because, sweet as life is, I believe that if its end came suddenly to me I should go to Him whose promises I have trusted and whose salvation is the Rock of my hope and peace.' "

And here Edward Dudley paused a little, and his hearers knew that just so had Nathaniel paused when he kept watch that wild night on the battle-field.

" 'But I'm afraid that mother would forget in her grief how much better it was with me there than it could ever be with me here ; and Dudley, if it shall so be that I go first, and you ever return and see my mother, will you promise me to take this message to her, be it sooner or later ?'

"And we clasped hands there, and I promised him in a lull of the wind.

“‘I want you to solemnly charge her, as though I came back from the grave and spoke to her, not to go sorrowing and broken-hearted through life for me; to think of me gladly, to speak of me cheerfully as of one with whom it is all well, and who has only gone home a little while before her. Tell her to be glad, because she had me to give to God; glad because I am happy; and to think and to speak of me not as dead, but as Nathaniel who is in heaven.’”

Mrs. Trueman leaned forward; the tears fell softly into her lap.

“Edward,” she said, after a long stillness, “my heart is comforted at last. I will obey Nathaniel’s last message. I will not grieve for him as I have done. I will wait patiently until God calls me.”

“And whether you or I meet Nathaniel, who is in heaven, first, Mrs. Trueman, he will know that I fulfilled his wish, and that it accomplished the work which he desired it should,” said the young Colonel.

“Oh, I see now I’ve been in the wrong to grieve so long without any hope,” continued Mrs. Trueman, with the tears which had blessedness and healing in them falling softly on the hands clasped in her lap. “Sometimes when your uncle talked to me, Edward, as never man talked before, it would seem to me for a little while that I *could* almost give him up to God; and then the old longing and hungering for a sight of my boy’s dead face would come back to me, and I couldn’t put it away; but your mother won’t forget your words, Nathaniel; no, she won’t forget them!”

There came a sob from the corner where Lucy sat, and John Deming went up to the weeping girl and drew her arm softly in his and led her to her mother.

"Mrs. Trucman," said the officer, "will you take me in Nathaniel's stead for Lucy's sake?"

She looked up then and smiled on them through her tears as she had not smiled since Nathaniel's death.

"I will take you in his stead," she answered. "My boy and girl, may the Lord bless you!"

An hour later the three young men and Grace started for home, for the lawyer accompanied his brother-officers to the Deacon's. They talked, as was natural, on the prospects of peace, and discussed the state of the army and the insurrection that was imminent among the soldiery if Congress did not take some measures to settle the long delayed payments of both officers and men. As they drew near the house they caught sight of the flag waving above Grace's window in the faint moonlight. The sight of it thrilled all their hearts. For that banner they had toiled and suffered, and counted no sacrifice dear. To earn for it a name and a place among the nations had been the one aim and toil of their youth; and now its fair folds floated them the sign and token of their triumph—the new, glorious witness in the face of all the old tyrannies and despotisms of the ages that a new deliverance and liberty had arisen in the earth.

And as such thoughts crowded fast on the souls of the young officers, they took off their hats and swung them in the air, and saluted the flag with three cheers so loud and long that the echoes on the distant hills woke up and hurled them back like the sound of thunder. In a moment lights appeared at the windows of the distant farm-houses, and heads were thrust out here and there.

"We've roused up the good people in the neighborhood by our explosive patriotism," laughed Edward Dudley.

"No matter; it was in such a good cause; "with that laugh of hers which was so sweet a thing to hear that one would be sure to listen for it again; and then Robert opened the gate, and the brother and sister went up to the house, while the Colonel returned to the Parson's and his friend to the tavern.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"ROBERT," called Grace Palmer from the head of the stairs one morning, "won't you come up here? I want to put your ingenuity to active use this morning."

Robert went up to his sister with a comical lugubriousness in his face.

"Use is a word I never took much delight in; but I'm ready to sacrifice myself for your services this forenoon."

The brother and sister went into the "spare chamber." In one corner stood the high-post mahogany bedstead, with its snowy curtains of white dimity depending from the foot.

"I've been trying to fasten them up for the last hour; but I'm not tall enough nor strong enough, and I remembered you were both, Robert."

He took up the hammer, whistling a tune, and mounted the chair which Grace had vacated and went diligently to work, while Grace busied herself with the large loops of satin ribbon with which the curtains were caught back to the bedposts.

"There, does that suit you?" asked the young man, with a flourish of his hammer, half an hour later.

"Perfectly. You've made a good Captain, Robert, but it's manifest enough nature cut you out for a carpenter."

"The world will lose the benefit my genius might have

conferred upon it, then, for I've settled my work in life within the last few days."

Grace's head was lifted in quick surprise.

"What do you mean, Robert?"

"Simply that as soon as General Washington gives the order for our army to disband, I am going to turn my sword into a ploughshare, and, after the example of my forefathers, settle down a simple patriarch of the soil."

"You look very much like one!" said his sister, setting the words to the tune of her laugh.

"Never mind that, Grace. It takes time to accomplish a transition like the one I've in view. But, seriously, I've had several long talks with father of late, and he feels he's growing old, and wants gradually to drop off the mantle of the farm from his shoulders to mine. There's no other in the family to receive it; and though my tastes would have led me to a different sort of life, I couldn't see the old homestead fall into strange hands; so I've consented to father's plan. He's set his heart on it."

"I'm glad of it, Robert, for all our sakes. One of these days, too, I suppose there'll be another Mrs. Palmer, on whose shoulders mother can drop her mantle, too."

"That depends on several things, Gracie. I've got my little watch-case yet."

"What an example of fidelity you are, Robert. I suppose the little girl who made that is almost a young lady now?"

"She must be eighteen at least. When the war is over I intend to go in quest of her. You have kept my secret well, Grace, and you are a woman, too."

"I don't relish that kind of compliment, Robert; but I'll

forgive the implied reflection on my sex, and wish you success in your knight-errantry."

Robert's thoughts seemed to have gone away from this conversation, with its combination of jest and earnestness, to some other topic. He looked at his sister gravely, and then asked :

"Grace, have you any definite plans about your future—what it will be, and where?"

"No," answered Grace, very gravely now. "Edward and I have never talked it over, and all these long years I have never dared to indulge dreams of the future which only made the present seem more dreadful. But why do you ask, Robert?"

"Because, putting this and that together, with some hints which Edward has dropped, I have a strong notion where his tastes and choice will fall."

"Where?" asked Grace, and the satin ribbon fell from her hands.

Robert shook his head.

"He'll tell his own plans and purposes when he gets ready. I didn't know but he had done this already, and only asked to see if they confirmed my opinions."

And all his sister's questioning could draw nothing further out of Robert. But his remarks afforded her a new topic of wonder and interest.

The furlough of Colonel Dudley and Captain Palmer expired in less than two weeks, and the evening previous to the former's departure he said to Grace :

"Put on your bonnet. We must take our last walk together."

"Oh, don't say that ;" her face showed plainer than she fancied how the speech had hurt her.

"Our last before I return to go no more to battle," was the young Colonel's reassuring answer. "I tell you my honest convictions when I say that I believe Great Britain and America have fought their last battle, and all the tidings which we receive from across the water confirm this opinion. I believe that the English government will soon acknowledge our independence and withdraw their troops from our shores."

"Oh, blessed day for all who see it!" exclaimed Grace.

"I trust that we shall; and you who have been so brave through all the darkness and peril of the past will not fail me, now that the danger is over."

And he took her straw hat from her hands and tied it carefully, and they went out together.

"I'm afraid," she said, as he gave her his arm at the gate, "that all the heroism has left me, and that I should prove myself only the weakest of cowards if another time of trial should come."

"You'd do nothing of the kind, I am persuaded, Grace; but you've lived heroism enough for one life."

Then they looked on the night and were silent. The moon hung like a great golden lily in the sky, and beneath it the earth lay in a white flowing tunic of light. The spring was early that year, and the sprouting leaves ran in a green flame along the branches, and the land was stirring with the life and joy of May.

The Colonel broke the silence which had been audible to both of them.

"Grace," he said, "have you divined, with some nice intuition of yours, that my thoughts for the last week have been much with your future and mine?"

"My 'nice intuitions' have all failed me," she said, and the soft flush on her cheeks became wide bloom.

"Well, then, I must tell you, with such bungling unsatisfactory words as I can find, that I am tired of living away from you and without you, and that when I come back my heart will want you, and it will not easily be patient and wait."

She did not answer him; on the soft matting of grass, swathed in moonlight, she walked with her fair head drooping by his side.

"Grace," he said, after a little silence, "look up and tell me what profession or work in life you would choose for me."

She looked up now, earnest and frank.

"Just that one which would suit your tastes and character best."

"Well, put it in another way. Of all business and professions, which do you consider the best, the noblest in which a man can engage?"

"Any and all are good if a man does his duty in them; but I suppose there is no work so great, so noble, so good, as that of a faithful minister of the Gospel."

"I think so. How would you like me to be this?"

Her start of surprise, her amazed, half-doubtful look, was something he seemed to enjoy.

"Oh, Edward, I never thought of you as *that*!"

"I know it; but I have for some years past, and the time has come for me now to decide. It is right that I should tell you that I must make some sacrifices if I enter the ministry, for I have very little worldly goods, as you know, and I have some friends in high places who will be ready to serve me; and our young country will need just

now men of talent and education in this new experiment of a democratic government. There is a probability that a political career, which promises in a few years emolument and position, will open before me if I choose to seek it."

"Yes," she said, looking up at him with fond, proud eyes.

"But there are greater, better things than these; and I can in no way serve God and my generation so well as to be a minister of the Gospel."

"Then be one, Edward," and the soul of Grace Palmer was in her eyes.

"You know, Grace, when you say this, that it involves a good deal of sacrifice and responsibility for you."

Her smile was touching in its humility, and yet it was brave and hopeful enough to satisfy any man; just the sort of smile that needed no words to help it.

A little while afterwards Edward Dudley went on to say that he had talked the matter over on all sides with his uncle, and that Parson Willetts had entered very warmly into the matter, and was quite determined that as soon as the war was closed Edward should at once return to the parsonage and study theology for a couple of years with him.

He was growing infirm, and fancied that Edward, on whom the old man doated as on a son, could be of much service to him in sharing somewhat his parochial work and duties, which the clergyman's growing infirmities began to make burdensome.

"And Grace," continued the young man, "the parsonage needs sadly the kindly influences, the graceful handiwork of a woman all over it. How would you like to go there and live with uncle and me?"

Her face dropped beyond his gaze, but her answer came hurried and frightened :

" Oh, Edward, I couldn't go *there* to live !"

He had expected just such a protest.

" What; not with *me*, Grace! I don't like to be put off for another two years, and shall be a great deal happier with you to smile on and encourage my studies every day."

Edward Dudley used a great deal of this style of argument, which he rightly divined would have more weight than any other with Grace, especially when he put the matter in a way which he declared would most promote his own happiness and welfare.

There were numerous objections and protests which he had to meet and overcome, which related principally to her own inexperience for such a position; but the matter ended at last in Grace's soft admission that she could be happy anywhere if she was of any comfort or aid to Edward.

" Then go home and get ready to come with me soon after Great Britain acknowledges the independence of these United States," he said to her as he opened the garden gate, and she knew what he meant.

Their parting that night was not what the others had been; and remembering this, the twain thanked God in their hearts.

" Gracie," whispered Robert to her the next morning, just as he was about leaving, " do you know what I meant when I spoke about Edward Dudley's future prospects that morning when we put up the curtains in the spare chamber?"

" How should I know, when you wouldn't give me the least light on the matter?" she said, with a little conscious look.

"Well, then, if I must come straight out, how does the idea of being a parson's wife strike you?"

Her laugh and her blush leaped out together.

"Didn't I tell you you'd know in good time? I wasn't going to anticipate Edward's questions," patting her on the cheek. "Here is prosperity to you both with my last kiss," and Robert Palmer went his way.

And so, after long waiting, the time came for Grace to set about preparations for her wedding wardrobe, as happy maidens do, amid sweet visions of the future, of home and love, and new pleasant cares and duties; and if memories of the past crept up and sobered somewhat the radiant perspective of Grace Palmer's future, she was not the less but the more blessed for these things.

There were no sewing-machines in those days to facilitate matters, and the spinning-wheel and the slow toiling needle had to do it all; but there were two pairs of busy and skilful hands for the work, and hosts of willing friends and neighbors to add their tributaries to the general forces of quilting, and cutting, and basting, and stitching.

Great was the consternation of the Deacon's wife when she first learned the future which awaited her daughter; and which in those days was regarded as one of peculiar importance and responsibility; but after pondering the matter in her own mind for a few days, and regarding the girl with a good deal of solicitude, Mrs. Palmer privately informed the Deacon that she'd "ra'ly brought herself to the conclusion that Grace was cut out for a minister's wife."

CHAPTER XXVII.

ANOTHER year had passed. This one had gone swiftly—so swiftly that when it laid its harvest of days gathered out of the golden spring, and glowing summer, and the red heart of the autumn, in the great white storehouse of winter, Grace asked, with a wide wonder in her brown eyes:

“Where has the year gone?” And it was the first time for eight years that she had asked this question.

It was the last day of May. The brier-roses were in a red heat of bloom by the window; the lilacs were in a purple flame; the apple-trees, in the full tide of blossoming, stood up that year like a vast white rose, flushed with pink.

On this last day of May Mrs. Palmer and Grace stood together in the spare chamber, where the open windows let in a shower of sunlight and all kinds of sprouting fragrances. Both mother and daughter were intent on securing in the frames a piece of elaborate patchwork in the shape of a flaming sunflower, made of diminutive triangles of bright-colored satin on a grey-white ground of the same material, while four stars of smaller size and similar pattern occupied the corners of the immense square.

“Well, Grace,” said Mrs. Palmer, as she adjusted one of the chairs on which the long frames rested for the twentieth time, and surveyed the flaming billows of patchwork with admiration, “we must chalk the first row round this after-

noon, for I shall have enough to keep me spry to-morrow mornin' gettin' ready for the quiltin'-party by two o'clock. Have you made up your mind yet what pattern you'll have?"

"No; I'll let you decide, mother," running a cord through a small groove in a ball of chalk.

Mrs. Palmer looked anxious and undecided.

"There's scroll, and double-shell, and oak-leaf, and herrin'-bone, and di'mond, that al'ays look well; I can't tell for the life on me which would suit this best."

"Suppose we decide on the double-shells, then," answered Grace, not suspecting that the name had quite as much to do with her choice as the inherent merit of the pattern.

"Double-shells never was beat in my eye," answered her mother, glad to reach a decision on so important a matter.

Then followed a brief discussion respecting the position of the first row of shells; and after this, Mrs. Palmer continued:

"There's no use, Grace, in askin' any more than can get round the quilt, but I expect there'll be a good many hard feelin's in consequence; everybody 'll want a hand in it."

"Well, we can obviate all trouble in that quarter by giving out invitations for two afternoons; we never could get through with it in *one*, mother."

"That's a real bright idee, Grace; and it won't be much more trouble to bake up for two suppers than for one."

At this moment Deacon Palmer came into the chamber. They manifested no surprise at seeing him, for the old man of late was in the habit of passing any little interludes in his farm-work with his family. His glance fell on the quilt a moment, and then went up to his daughter's face,

with some new tenderness struggling under the heavy eyebrows. He laid his hand on the girl's shoulder.

"It don't seem as though I was going to lose my little girl so soon," he said, softly.

Grace could now bear any allusions to her future with tolerable composure, and the flush that was like the tint of sea-shells in her cheek scarcely deepened itself as she looked up with a smile that was worth going far to see.

"I won't be much of a loss, father dear; I shall be so near home, you know."

"I know it; I'm not certain I ever could be brought to givin' you up if Edward was a goin' to carry you away off from us."

And Grace wondered as she bent over the quilt whether, even for Edward's sake, she could make up her mind to go very far from her father, as old age was beginning to close round him and she was the very apple of his eye. Perhaps her parents divined her thought, for there was a little silence which Mrs. Palmer broke:

"Father, did you ever set your eyes on a greater beauty than that?" nodding towards the quilt.

The Deacon inspected it with that look of profound mystery and helpless incapacity which his sex are apt to bestow on all such triumphs of feminine genius.

"It looks fine as a peacock," was his not very appreciative rejoinder. "But, mother, aren't you taking rather too much on your hands jest now? You've been all your life about this 'ere kind of work, and you must have bedquilts enough by this time to outlast half a dozen generations."

"Father," exclaimed Mrs. Palmer, stopping short in her work and confronting her husband with a solemn impres-

siveness of tone and manner, "would you have a daughter of your'n get married without a quiltin' aforehand?"

Thus appealed to, the Deacon looked undecided and reflective.

"I don't know as I can see any objection to it. I s'pose folks have done it afore, and got through life jest as comfortable."

"*Decent* folks never have!" with a very fervid emphasis on the adjective; for Mrs. Palmer was a strong conservator of all old customs and ceremonies. "For my part, I could never be brought to consentin' to a weddin's comin' off under *my* roof without a quiltin' aforehand."

Mrs. Palmer being summoned down stairs at this juncture, her further remarks were cut short.

"What day does Edward say we may look for him now, Grace?" asked her father.

"The first of week after next. He writes that he has a furlough for an indefinite period from General Washington. He thinks that the army will be disbanded soon; and there is no probability of his returning to it. And, father—"

She caught her breath here, and small soft flames in her cheek went, and came, and widened.

"Go on, my child."

"He writes that he hasn't any time to spare now; and he's anxious to get to work; and, and—a good many other things. In short, he wants matters to come off a day or two after his return."

"Whew!" said the Deacon. "So soon as that? The fellow's in a great hurry, seems to me."

"He's had to wait eight years, you know, father," with a very beguiling little plea in her tones.

"Well, I suppose I may as well make up my mind to it

one time as another, bein' it's got to come; so take your own time, Grace."

"Dear father!"—The tears that stood bright in her eyes said the rest.

Then the Deacon drew a long narrow package, with some foreign marks on it, from his deep coat-pocket.

"It seems that I'm jest in time," he said, handing it to Grace. "The barge got in to-day, and Captain Ash is an old friend of mine and give me a fust chance at his cargo, and that was among 'em."

The girl's eager fingers tore away the wrappings, and a magnificent brocade disclosed itself. Its lavender-colored ground drifted all over with lilies of the valley, whose flakes and festoons of shining silver looked at a little distance like a white cloud of surf dazzled with sunshine.

"Oh, father!" Grace drew a long breath and clasped her hands in a most expressive pantomime of admiration.

"You won't think your father's without some taste now?" enjoying to the full her mute surprise and delight.

"I never saw anything half so beautiful in my life! Why, father, I shall never dare to wear it. It's good enough for a queen!"

"And isn't my daughter good enough for a queen?"

At this moment Mrs. Palmer returned, and her eyes were dazzled with the silver cloud which Grace held up before her.

The usual feminine range of adjectives at Mrs. Palmer's command failed her at this time. After inspecting the fabric at different points she said, making a tactile examination of its quality:

"It's thick as any board, and will stand alone any day. I declare, Grace!" And she shook her head.

Mrs. Palmer would have found it difficult to embody in words the various feelings which expressed themselves in that pantomime. The Deacon only recognised a small part of these when he said :

"I know it looks rather showy for plain folks like us ; but, mother, we've only one daughter, and she won't get married but once in her life, so we can afford to make something of a time over it."

All the mother was in the pride and tenderness of the glance which Mrs. Palmer lifted to her daughter's face.

"I s'pose we can't do too much for her, father, seein', as you say, she's all we've got. I'm goin' to do somethin' for my part, too ; and that's to give you, Grace, your grandma's silver set. Likely you'll want to use it sometimes, though I never had it out except to rub it up once a year. It's been in the family over a hundred years. There isn't many a girl will have the settin' out you will, Grace."

"There isn't many 'll deserve it," thought her father ; although, from conscientious motives, he refrained from expressing his opinion.

At last, when he turned to go down stairs, Mrs. Palmer followed him, asking in a slightly wheedling tone :

"Now, father, do tell me what you give for that weddin' dress?"

"That's the Captain's secret and mine," answered the Deacon. And Mrs. Palmer knew that they both could keep it.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE two weeks which intervened were very rapid and busy ones under the Deacon's roof. Mrs. Palmer found, as the time for the wedding drew near, that the demands of the occasion transcended her powers and Grace's; so she beguiled into her service "Aunt Chloe," an old colored woman who had presided over Parson Willetts's domestic affairs since the death of his wife.

Aunt Chloe was a small, thin, withered little woman, with a flaming red and yellow turban beetling majestically over her sable complexion and general abruptness of feature. But the thick, mellow laugh, always shaking the little withered body to and fro, was absolute testimony to her good-nature, and she possessed all that natural shrewdness of observation, that quick wit and imitation which are among the characteristics of her race.

Moreover, Aunt Chloe was possessed of remarkable gastronomic genius, and she was always in her element in the midst of preparations for a wedding; and in the concoctions of various kinds of wedding-cake she held herself absolutely without a rival; and Mrs. Palmer had accordingly resigned this department into her hands.

The morning of the day previous to that on which the ceremony was to take place, Mrs. Palmer came into the kitchen in a fever of heat and exertion.

"Oh, dear, Aunt Chloe, it's a comfort to think folks don't have to get married but once in their lives."

Aunt Chloe's chuckling, oleaginous laugh rolled in her throat.

"Lor' sakes, *Miss* Palmer," she said; "there's plenty o' folks would get married three or four times ef they only had the chance."

"Well," continued Mrs. Palmer, with a sigh of resignation, "they must like gettin' ready for it better'n I do."

"I think it's fust-rate to be gettin' ready for it!" interposed Benny, with such oracular gravity at this moment, that it started off Aunt Chloe's laugh again, and she was obliged to sit down and hold her hands on her knees.

"Nobody'll ever cotch you asleep in the mornin', Benny," was her compliment, between little whiffs of laughter. "I declare you're a smart 'un. What do you know about gettin' ready for a weddin'?"

"I know there's plenty of weddin'-cake on hand," said the boy, with his round eyes dancing like coals betwixt his curls; "and that's all the good there is in gettin' married, anyway. Aunt Chloe, when you make *my* wedding-cake, you must make one big loaf that'll last a great many days, all for myself, and nobody else is to touch it."

This time Aunt Chloe was utterly convulsed and had to hold her hands on both sides, and Mrs. Palmer could not refrain from joining in the laugh.

When the black woman had at last recovered herself, she remarked to Mrs. Palmer, in a solemn way, that she might depend on't, that child was born to light a candle somewhere in the world, a remark which did in nowise diminish Mrs. Palmer's faith in Aunt Chloe's natural acuteness and prophetic insight.

"How is that cake comin' on?" she inquired, after a glance round the domain she had temporarily resigned; for

Mrs. Palmer had been occupied with Grace the whole morning in setting the chambers in order for guests who were expected from a distance on this occasion.

"Jest come and see for-yourself, *Miss Palmer*," and Aunt Chloe led the way with an air of proud satisfaction into the cool milk-room, where the cake was spread out on two tables, pervading the whole air with its spicy, saccharine aroma.

The bride's cake stood in the centre, towering loftily over all the others, the sides and top glistening in icing. Around it stood smaller mounds of snow and smooth plains of a maroon tint, thickly freckled with citron and plums—altogether a wonderful triumph of Aunt Chloe's genius.

"There, *Miss Palmer*," said the little black woman, waving her hand majestically towards the tables, "did you ever see anything to beat *that*?"

"Never in all my born days," fervently ejaculated the Deacon's wife. "You have the luck, Aunt Chloe."

Here Benny's face was thrust inside.

"Mother, *he's* come; the stage has got in!" was his laconic communication of the future bridegroom's advent.

Gratification and anxiety at this announcement struggled for mastery in Mrs. Palmer's face. She only expressed the latter to Aunt Chloe.

"Dear me, now! there won't be such a thing as gettin' hold of Grace ag'in to-day, now Edward's come. They haven't seen each other for a year, and he won't have her out of his sight for one while."

"Lau, *Miss Palmer*, you can't expect anything short o' young folks! Let 'em have their time; they won't be young al'ays," answered Aunt Chloe, who had a secret sympathy with her future mistress. Then she beckoned to

Benjamin, who stood in wide-eyed admiration before the tables, and turning to one of the shelves, took from it a cake baked in the shape of a large coffee-cup, and slipped the miniature loaf into his hand, saying, with a mysterious look, "Don't say nothin' about it. I kept a corner of my eye open for you."

"And mind, Benny, you keep clear of the parlor this mornin'," added Mrs. Palmer, as the boy started for the door.

Colonel Dudley's arrival took no one by surprise this time, and Grace was in some sort of readiness to receive him; but Mrs. Palmer's prophecy that the young officer would absolutely appropriate the society of his bride elect proved itself by the events of that morning. It was in vain that Grace occasionally ventured a faint suggestion of especial duties demanding her supervision for this crisis. She was met with the invariable argument:

"I haven't had a sight of you for a year, Grace—what a long one it has seemed—and you mustn't take your face away from me this morning."

"You'll have a chance to see it, Edward, every day of your life in a little while; and grow tired of it too, perhaps, some time."

The smile half contradicted and apologized for the words; and yet there was a little faint doubt or fear in the tones.

"No danger of *that*, Grace," answered Edward Dudley, solemnly. "I shall carry through my life too keen a memory of those long years when my eyes hungered for a sight of this dear face to have it ever become 'common' to me."

"I understand you, Edward. I have often thought that

our lives together would be different, because of the great shadow that fell upon our youth ; that some new element of earnestness and happiness would enter into them because of all we have passed through."

"No doubt of it ; such a long, fiery trial and discipline *ought* to make us better man and woman for the years that remain."

Then they both sat thinking, silently.

"What is it, Grace ?" For a new wish had struggled up through the gravity of her face.

"It came across me then, suddenly, that I wanted Robert to be here to-morrow night. It will not seem quite complete without him."

The Colonel smiled.

"I have a feeling—a presentiment, as your sex say—that he'll be here before the ceremony takes place."

"Why, Edward !" with the startled pleasure in her brown eyes that he loved to see ; "what *has* put that idea into your head ?"

"I saw Robert a few weeks since, just after he had obtained his furlough, and he then told me he anticipated being here as soon as I was ; but it seems I have preceded him."

"There is something beyond your words, Edward."

"If there is, I am not at liberty to disclose it. Wait and see whether you find me a false prophet."

A suspicion suddenly crossed Grace's mind which she was about to utter, but a second thought held the words back. Robert had a fashion of doing things in his own way. She resolved to ask no questions, and changed the subject by saying :

"This last year has improved you wonderfully, Edward

You don't look like the same sun-browned, weather-beaten man who came up that walk a year ago."

It was true; the year in camp which the officers of the American army had enjoyed after their long and terrible labor and hardships had effected visible improvement in the health and appearance of many, among whom was Edward Dudley.

"I was haggard, weather-beaten, worn out, when I came to you a year ago. I've had some time for recuperation since; and it's well, too, considering what is to take place to-morrow night. I'm not vain, but I shouldn't like to have the contrast greater than it is."

Grace had no tact in answering pretty compliments with others, as most of her sex have; she was too natural and simple for any arts, and Edward Dudley was not much in the habit of bestowing compliments, nor would he have liked a woman who desired them. At this time Grace arose suddenly, saying:

"I've had a present, Edward, that I want you to see." And she went to the cupboard in one corner of the room and opened it.

He followed her, and was greeted by a display of china a little more exquisite than anything he ever remembered seeing in his life; and this, in Colonel Dudley's case, was saying good a deal. Every piece in the set had some new landscape finely traced in the shining transparent ware, so that the whole embraced a variety of beautiful and varied pictures.

"I shall not tell you where I got them until you have passed your judgment on each," said Grace. And the next half hour slipped by examining and admiring each separate article.

"It's a rare gift and a costly one, Grace," said the Colo-

ncl, looking up from the last tea-cup. "What friend have you with tastes so fine and heart so generous?"

"They are the gift of the dead rather than of the living," she answered, with a shadow which was something better than grief coming into her face. "Mrs. Trueman sent these to me, Edward, as Nathaniel's gift to us both. He brought this set home to his mother when he went on that sea voyage with his uncle when he was about fourteen years old; and Mrs. Trueman wanted us to have something that we could call Nathaniel's gift."

And now Colonel Dudley's eyes sought the beautiful porcelain with something besides admiration.

"But the real meaning of the gift," continued Grace, "is to be found in that last message which Nathaniel left you for his mother. Lucy says that Mrs. Trueman has been a different woman from the night that she heard it; not, of course, the bright, active, bustling little woman we all remember before Nathaniel's death, but she has never grieved for him since, refusing to be comforted; and her interest in life and in old things has grown steadily since that time, and she's evinced it in nothing quite so much as in our affairs just now. Indeed, Lucy told me that she'd finally obtained her mother's promise to be present to-morrow evening."

"I rejoice to hear it, and it will be doubly gratifying to Lucy and all of us, as she is to be your bridesmaid."

"Yes; that was arranged long ago. Do you think Mr. Deming can manage to get here?"

"He will, as he promised me, if human power can effect it; but his duties are of such a nature that it's well-nigh impossible for him to leave his post for a single day. Still, I have strong hopes of seeing him."

"I long to have them realized, especially for Lucy's sake."

A little pause, and Grace resumed :

"I haven't exhausted my gifts yet. I've something else to show you ;" and she took down from a higher shelf a waiter containing a silver tea-set of an ancient fashion, with quaint embossing and devices. "It was my great-grandmother's," she said ; "it is mine now."

The young Colonel had an artist's eye for these things, and perhaps he knew their æsthetic worth a little better than Grace. She was half-surprised to find that he touched the ancient plate almost reverently, for to him they were histories and biographies of the past.

"Some time," he said, "I hope to sit at my own table in our own little parsonage and see *her* fair young face shining out sweet and strange from behind this ancient silver."

Grace's laugh and blush came together as she told him she had some conscientious scruples about the propriety of parsons' wives sitting at their own table behind ancient silver. It might not be setting a good example to the congregation.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE evening of the next day was as fair a one as ever breathed itself out of the heart of June. The young moon bloomed amid her stars like a solitary flower amid a lake of golden buds. The winds loitered up from the shore, and lost themselves amid the pines which stood half-way betwixt the shore and the lane that led past Deacon Palmer's.

The old homestead had never witnessed so fair a scene as that which was to occur under its roof to-night. It was brilliantly lighted from garret to cellar, and overflowing with friends and neighbors from far and near; for this night was to witness the nuptials of the only daughter of the house with the nephew of their old minister; and this fact, with all the long trials and uncertainties which had accompanied their betrothal, made the event one of no common interest and significance. The parlor was hung with evergreens and roses, the tasteful work of Lucy Trueman and a bevy of merry handmaidens. It was not far from eight o'clock when the guests crowded into the parlor, and a hush stole over the humming voices and happy faces, and all eyes were fastened on the door, where a moment later appeared the stately white head of Parson Willetts, followed by the Deacon and his young son, with Mrs. Palmer and Mrs. Trueman; and beyond these came the bridal party.

How they all held their breaths to see her, the fair young bride, in her silver foam of brocade, and the spray of white orange blossoms, like stars, in the bright darkness of her hair. How sweet and bright, in picturesque contrast with the bride, shone Lucy Trueman's face to-night, in the grey satin, flushed with pink, which had been her mother's wedding-dress. And by Lucy's side stood John Deming, who had arrived at the very last moment, with barely time to exchange his dusty travelling suit for one suited to the occasion.

And then the solemn voice of Parson Willetts broke the silence; the brief marriage ceremony was performed, the touching prayer was offered, which reached far back into the past to that fearful cloud of darkness and anguish under which they had all walked; and then the prayer broke out in a joyful thanksgiving for the morning of peace and liberty that had at last arisen upon the nation; thanksgiving, too, for the young pair, who, after counting no sacrifice dear for their country's sake, had at last, in the presence of many witnesses, united their lives—the lives that the old Parson besought God fervently might dwell in peace and happiness under their own vine and fig-tree, until they should go to that home where it was never said: "Till death do you part."

Then the blessing was pronounced, and Edward Dudley had taken to wife Grace, the daughter of Deacon Palmer.

Dear reader, it was a hearty, old-fashioned wedding, with a great deal of warm feeling and comparatively little ceremony about it. Aunt Chloe was in her element, and her yellow turban shone like a tropical sun as she bustled round with trays heaped with cake; while Benny, who always shone conspicuous on such occasions, followed next

with the wine. Of course there was no dancing; the younger part of the guests, however, indulged in various old-fashioned plays and games. But the bridal party did not join in any of this general hilarity. A solemn joy, which flowed in deeper and less demonstrative channels, filled their souls; and amid all the greetings and congratulations of the evening, there were no words which Edward Dudley remembered so long as he did those of Mrs. Trueman when he found himself standing at her side, and she looked up in his face with a smile that touched him.

"I have been thinking, Edward," she said, "how Nathaniel would have enjoyed being here to-night."

"So have I, dear Mrs. Trueman; and then I remembered that if it was in his power to be even here he would not, because he is so much happier where he is now."

"I know it," said Nathaniel's mother, looking up with a smile that had something of solemn triumph in its sweetness. "I am content now that it is just as it is. It is enough for me to know that Nathaniel is happy, and I am going to him."

Nobody else caught Mrs. Trueman's words, and at that moment Mr. Deming, who was standing near, remarked to Parson Willetts:

"I hope, sir, that you'll have an opportunity to do for me before long precisely the favor which you've done this evening for your nephew here."

"I shall be very happy to, sir," answered the stately old Parson; "but it will take somebody beside you and I to make that bargain;" and he smiled benignantly down on Lucy, who stood by the clergyman's side.

And Lucy Trueman's cheeks were crimson, and she looked for once as though she had nothing to say.

It was growing late, and the guests were beginning to think about leaving, when all on a sudden there was a stir and confusion about the door, and in a moment Robert Palmer entered the room, and on his arm hung a small, slender girl-woman, her large blue eyes full of shyness and bewilderment, and her sweet, child-like face in a glow of confusion.

Robert moved right up to the place where his family, stricken dumb with amazement, was gathered.

"Father, mother, Grace," said the young man, "haven't you a welcome for me to-night, and for this woman, *my wife, Mrs. Robert Palmer?*"

Exclamations, welcomes, tears, congratulations, followed in confusion. The Deacon made the first coherent speech after kissing his new daughter.

"Certainly. I'll welcome your wife, Robert; but where in the world did you get her?"

"In the very house where, six years ago, she found me and saved my life. If it had not been for her I should not be standing among you to-night."

Then the pretty young wife looked up through her blushes, and said in her sweet, clear voice :

"My father, and mother, and grandmother are dead, and I felt almost alone in the world when he came to me and told me he had carried the memory of the little girl who saved his life through all these years, and so I promised to come with him to be his wife, and a daughter and a sister to those he loves."

And from that hour the family of Robert Palmer took his young wife to their hearts, and never had reason to regret it.

The young husband waited only until he had resigned

his wife to his mother, and seen her travelling bonnet removed from her golden hair, before he turned to his sister and asked eagerly :

“Am I too late, Grace?”

“Just two hours and a half,” interposed the Colonel; “for at that time Grace Palmer merged herself in Mrs. Edward Dudley.”

Robert took the disappointment with his usual good-natured philosophy.

“There’s no use in mourning over it now. I should have been on hand in time if the stage hadn’t broken down. Grace, receive the congratulations and the blessings of your brother.”

“And take those of your sister, Robert, in good measure, flowing over.”

And they kissed each other.

“My Little Bessie,” said the young husband, as he looked fondly at her, standing by his mother’s side in her wedding-dress of white satin, “does she look anything as you fancied?”

“Not much. She is prettier than you painted her, Robert.”

The surprise and confusion consequent on Robert’s sudden advent with his new wife kept the guests together an hour or two longer. But at last they began to disperse, and a little after midnight the time came, as had been previously arranged, for Edward to take Grace to the parsonage.

The minister’s old chaise was at the door for that purpose; and at the last, Grace turned to her father and mother and said :

“It seemed very fitting that this night, which has

taken from you one daughter should bring you another."

Then she turned, took the arm of her husband, and went out from the old homestead.

CHAPTER XXX.

It is a day in a June six years later—a day which is twin-sister in its skies above and earth beneath to that one which witnessed the marriage of Edward and Grace Dudley. The windows of the wide old sitting-room of the parsonage are open this afternoon, and the roses burn like red coals among the dark leaves, and the lady who sits there pauses often in the little crimson sacque she is hemming, and looks out on the dark sea of meadow-grass and off to the distant hills, and her sweet brown eyes are full of quiet recognition and enjoyment of the beauty.

These years have dealt very tenderly with Mrs. Dudley. As she sits there in her simple white dress and the bands of bright brown hair parted over her low, open forehead, she looks the same girlish Grace Palmer of six years ago.

But suddenly the lady starts, for a little hand—you know it is that by the sound—is fumbling at the door-latch, and before the lady can rise, a little head, with a bright mesh of golden curls and a pair of eyes which his mother gave him, rushes into the room.

“What! is your nap over so quick, little Nathaniel?” asks the mother, and the caress in her heart slips out in her tones.

“Yes; I’ve had a great big sleep,” answers the small lisping voice, and the boy’s face is full of brightness and wakefulness. “Where’s papa?” and he starts for the study

door with the air of one who has absolute freedom of entrance there.

"Come back, my child," calls the soft voice of the mother; "papa isn't there; he's gone over the hills to visit some sick people this afternoon, and he won't be home until night."

The bright face is a little overshadowed as it comes back to the mother. She knows that he missed the frolic and race with his father which always came with the end of his afternoon nap.

"Now what will you have instead of papa?" she asks, slipping her needle in the hem of her work.

The boy looks perplexed and irresolute, and sticks his thumb between his lips like ripe berries.

"Something," he says.

"Perhaps mamma can help you think. Will you play with the pretty box of pictures Uncle Robert brought you last week, or will you have a nice story?"

The boy reflects a moment, and his mother tries to conceal her smile as she watches him standing with his thumb in his small mouth in an attitude of profound meditation. In a moment his face clears up:

"I'll have the story first;" and he bounds towards his mother.

She lifts him on her lap and smoothes the bright mesh of golden curls, and commences:

"There was once a little boy just the size and about the age of Nathaniel——"

The low running voice is broken up here with a little start, and in a surprised tone the lady asks:

"Why, Edward, what *has* brought you back so soon?"

The young clergyman comes towards his wife and child rapidly as his lame leg will permit.

"Some good news that I wanted to share with you, Grace."

Here the boy interposes, bounding from his mother's lap and rushing towards his father with a crow of triumph.

"Papa's little man;" and he is lifted up quickly, but does not receive his usual amount of attention just now.

"I've had a call, Grace," seating himself before his wife and watching the effect of his communication.

"You *have*! Where?" her face full of interest.

"At the old church." She looks touched and very glad withal; yet she says quietly: "It is no more than I expect, now that dear uncle has gone from the congregation here to the one above. You will accept it, Edward?"

"Shall I? I could get a larger salary and what the world would call a better offer, perhaps, by waiting."

"You don't really *mean* that while you ask it, Edward?"

"Not wholly. I know of no place where I can have, on the whole, a deeper influence or do more good."

"Then you will accept it; and I shall not have to leave father and mother in their old age, and break their hearts almost, and my own, too; for my life has taken deep roots in my old home."

"So has mine among this people. We will, please God, my little wife, live, work, and die here."

Mrs. Dudley smiled on him the sweet, brave, steadfast smile of Grace Palmer. Her husband leaned over and kissed her, and then he smiled on her archly with some new thought.

"What is it, Edward?"

"I was thinking, dear, of that first time I kissed you under the old apple-tree in the moonlight, and how indignant you were."

"When was *that*, papa?" interposed a little voice whose owner began to feel itself a good deal neglected by this time.

"Don't be inquisitive, my son," laughed the father, lifting the child above his head.

"Edward, what can have put such a thought into your mind?" said Mrs. Dudley, with a very slight flush amid her laughter, as the memory of her emotions on the occasion alluded to came vividly back. "You were a most presumptuous, audacious young man, and deserved something very different from what you received."

"I don't dispute it, as I seldom do any of your opinions, Mrs. Dudley. As for the thought, I presume it was suggested by a conversation I have just had with your father."

"What sort of a conversation, pray?"

"One that took a leap back into the past and out into the future, and which had for its starting point the call that he delivered to me from the church."

"Father was a happy man when he gave it to you, I know," said Mrs. Dudley, with a little touched smile.

"Happy! You ought to have seen him at that moment, my dear; and in order that I should bring you the news at once, he offered to relieve me of my visit over the hills this afternoon. By-the-by, he and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Robert, and Benny, are all coming over to tea and to congratulate you on your new elevation."

"I must try to assume a little extra dignity for the occasion, I suppose."

"Not a particle, O model of a minister's wife."

And here Mrs. Dudley laughed the laugh which had been Grace Palmer's; and remarked, putting up her work, that she must go out and inform Aunt Chloe of the anticipated advent of guests.

"Add four more to those I've mentioned," continued her husband.

"Why, Edward, Aunt Chloe will look serious!"

"No she won't; for Mr. and Mrs. Deming, with the baby and Mrs. Trueman, are the guests. I met John coming up and invited him over, and told him wherefore."

"Oh, Edward, the Lord has been very good to us!" her face going from its brightness into sudden gravity.

"Good, my dear wife! Our lives should be a perpetual psalm of thanksgiving for His tender mercies and loving kindness to us; and speaking of this, reminds me that another of your wishes and mine has been granted."

"What one, Edward?"

"Benjamin is going to Yale this fall. His father and he have just made up their minds to it."

"I'm afraid, Edward," and this time the gravity was deepened into tears as she looked up, "I'm afraid that this continual blessing, this great prosperity, will be too much for me; that, in receiving and enjoying all the gifts, I shall not in my heart and life give sufficient glory to the Giver."

"Grace," answered her husband, solemnly, "God, who gave us strength in the day of our adversity, will strengthen our hearts to take his prosperity humbly, gratefully."

"Papa! Papa!" A little chubby white hand ran into the

clergyman's thick locks of hair, and a little dimpled face was lifted up with a silent plea in it.

"I understand what that means, child, with your mother's eyes and your father's face," said the minister, pinching the cheek which was like a peach that held the summer's ripeness in it. "Come, while mamma goes off to take culinary counsel with Aunt Chloe, we'll have a frolic together," and he carried the crowing child into the library.

The sunlight of that June day looked also into the small window-panes of the old tavern, and fell in a golden spray on the pleasant-faced old lady who sat by the cradle stirring it softly with her foot and humming a low tune. And among the pile of soft pillows lay sleeping a year-old infant.

Wonderful for beauty was the face of this child, with the dark rings of hair clustering about it, with lips just parted and like the heart of crimson roses, while the small hands were clasped together like a pair of slow blossoming lilies.

Just then a pair of soft, swift feet entered the room, and Mrs. Lucy Deming came up to her window; and her face, a bright, young face, although a shade more matronly than it was six years ago, held some sudden surprise and joy in it.

"Mother," she said, in an undertone, with a glance at the cradle, "I've got some news for you. John stopped to tell me before he went to put up his horse. Can you guess it?"

"No. I never was much of a hand at guessin', Lucy; but I know it's good news from the looks of your face."

"My face tells the truth, then. Edward has just had a

call from our church, and of course he'll accept it and stay amongst us. I'm so glad for Grace's sake, for all their sakes, and for ours!"

"So am I; there's nobody in this world I'd go so far to hear preach," said Mrs. Trueman, fervently.

"And we are all to go over there to tea to congratulate them. John has just seen Edward."

At that moment the child stirred softly in his sleep. The young mother bent down to the cradle and looked on the sleeper; when she raised her face it was radiant with tenderness.

"Oh, mother, isn't he beautiful!" she said.

At that moment the child opened his eyes, and, catching sight of his grandmother, he stretched out his arms to her and crowed and laughed. Mrs. Trueman gazed on the boy a moment with a look like that with which, years ago, she had bent over another cradle. Then she lifted her eyes and spoke:

"Lucy, he has the face—he has the face of Nathaniel who is in heaven!"

And so, dear reader, we leave them all living their pleasant lives, doing their work for God and their generation in the fair, free land for which they suffered so long and which they bought with such a price. And while I have been writing of their deeds of heroism and sacrifices, all over this land the old heroisms and the old sacrifices have been made real again, and the children have stood up to dare and to suffer in the places of the fathers and the mothers.

And as for them the morning rose after the long night, so God grant it may arise on us, and that we keep

unbroken and undivided the inheritance they left us—an inheritance for which is now being poured out on many a fearful battle-ground blood as free and life as precious as those which have rendered sacred the "BATTLE-FIELDS OF OUR FATHERS."

THE END.







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